

Egyptian police foil protest

CAIRO (AP) — Egyptian professionals called off a march Monday to protest government interference after police surrounded their headquarters, beat four union members and arrested another. The professionals are protesting a proposed law to give the government oversight of union elections. Thirteen of the 22 independent unions are controlled by the Muslim Brotherhood, Egypt's largest fundamentalist organisation. The doctors, engineers, lawyers and others planned to gather at the doctor's syndicate in downtown Cairo and then march to Abdou El-Nasser Palace, a presidential office. They expected 5,000 to participate. But police blocked the professionals from entering the building. At least four union members were beaten, including two with rifle butts, and one was knocked unconscious. "About five policemen surrounded me and hit me on the back of my head with their rifle butts until I fell to the ground unconscious," said Abdul Aziz Abdul Hadi, one of the doctors. One person was arrested, said Anwar Shehata, treasurer of the doctors' syndicate.

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Media team heads for Bahrain

AMMAN (Petra) — A delegation representing the Jordanian official mass media Monday left Amman for Bahrain in response to an invitation by Bahraini Information Minister Tareq Al Mu'ayyad. The delegation is headed by Information Ministry Secretary General Nayef Maulla and includes as members Radio Jordan Director Hashem Khreizat and the Jordan News agency, Petra, director general, Abdullah Utoun. The delegation will meet during its several-day visit with Bahraini officials for talks on means of boosting and bolstering bilateral cooperation in media-related fields.

Top French cop resigns

PARIS (AFP) — A top French police official, Jacques Franquet, resigned on Monday after an aide to Prime Minister and presidential candidate Edouard Balladur accused police of lying in order to gain permission to carry out a controversial wire-tap. Mr. Franquet, director of criminal investigations, offered his resignation to Interior Minister Charles Pasqua, the interior ministry said in a communique. Mr. Pasqua cut short a presidential campaign meeting in Marseille, southern France, to return to Paris for a meeting with Mr. Franquet.

Sudan to hold elections in Halaib

KHARTOUM (AP) — Sudan will hold elections in a disputed border area in a move likely to inflame tensions with Egypt. The region, known as Halaib, is a triangular patch of desert bordering the Red Sea. Under an 1899 treaty, the land was incorporated into Egypt. But three years later, Egypt gave Sudan administrative powers, and both now claim it. The area is largely populated by Sudanese nomads. Sudan has registered voters in Halaib in preparation for the elections, which are to take place over several months, said Abdul Moneim Al Zaia, president of the general elections board.

GIA claims it killed intellectuals

ALGIERS (AFP) — Algeria's radical Islamic Armed Group claims in its latest weekly news bulletin that it is responsible for the killing of several Algerian cultural figures and six Tunisian police officers, the daily Tribune reported here Monday. The paper said that in the bulletin called Al Ansar and published Friday, the GIA claims responsibility for last week's slaying of Azzeddine Medjoul, the director of the Algerian National Theatre, of Abdul Hafid Said, a student leader, and of Nabila Djahmane, the head of a feminist organisation.

Verdicts in Mahfouz case approved

CAIRO (AP) — President Hosni Mubarak has approved the death sentences against two extremists convicted of attempting to assassinate Nobel prize-winning author Naguib Mahfouz. A military court ruled last month that the two men were guilty of carrying out a stabbing attack on Mr. Mahfouz and sentenced them to death. In extremist cases, there is no appeal to a higher court. Now that Mr. Mubarak has approved the sentences, the defendants have 15 days to seek clemency from him. Mr. Mubarak has so far rejected all such appeals.

U.S. helicopter crashes off Somalia

MANAMA (R) — A U.S. marine helicopter crashed while on a training mission off the coast of Somalia on Sunday and one person is still missing, the navy said on Monday. The Gulf-based U.S. Naval Forces Central Command said in a statement that four people were rescued when the single-engine UH-1N crashed in the Indian Ocean.

PLO leadership meets today on peace process

Arafat reiterates commitment to talks; Israel says 'Jenin first' alive

CAIRO (Agencies) — Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat has called an urgent meeting of the Palestine Liberation Organisation's (PLO) executive body which could decide to suspend talks with Israel and risk shattering the peace process, a PLO official said Monday.

"All the options are open at Tuesday's meeting in Cairo... including the suspension of the negotiations," the committee's secretary Jamal Al Surani, told AFP.

"If anyone thinks the Palestinians have no trump cards left, they are making a mistake because the suspension of the negotiations could have the effect of an atomic bomb on the whole peace process," he warned.

But Mr. Arafat said after talks with French Foreign Minister Alain Juppe in Paris that the peace process was not dead and that Tuesday's meeting was to "discuss and evaluate the situation overall."

"We are committed to the peace process, but we have arrived at an impasse," he said. Asked whether the peace process was dead he

replied simply, "No."

Israeli officials said that Mr. Arafat had not dismissed their offer to run the West Bank town of Jenin and perhaps other cities while Israeli troops maintained a presence.

Israel Radio on Monday quoted Mr. Arafat as saying in Paris he was willing to consider the idea if Israel gave him control of West Bank towns in addition to Jenin and if a timetable for eventual troop withdrawal from all towns was agreed on.

However, a senior Palestinian negotiator said Monday the Palestinians rejected the idea.

"We're not going to take over any cities while Israeli soldiers remain, even if we are given guarantees and timetables by the Israelis for a troop withdrawal," Ahmad Qureia, the Palestinian economy minister, told the Associated Press.

Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin made the "Jenin first" offer to Mr. Arafat last week in hopes of breaking the deadlock in the talks on expanding Palestinian self-rule to the West Bank. Mr. Arafat

now controls the Gaza Strip and the West Bank town of Jericho.

Under the Israel-PLO accord, troops were to have pulled out of West Bank towns by last July. Mr. Rabin delayed withdrawal after a series of attacks by militants designed to derail the peace process.

Foreign Minister Shimon Peres, who met with the PLO leader in Paris over the weekend, was quoted as telling Israel's cabinet that Mr. Arafat had not rejected the Israeli offer and that he would give a final answer next week.

Mr. Arafat told Mr. Peres he wanted administrative control over other West Bank towns in addition to Jenin, according to the Yedioth Ahronoth daily.

Israeli government spokesman Uri Dromi suggested Monday that a step-by-step approach was the only way forward.

"We start with what's feasible and move to what's desirable. We start with Jenin because there are no settle-

(Continued on page 7)

Egypt and Israel make progress on settling row

CAIRO (Agencies) — Egypt said Monday it was making progress with Israel in settling a crisis over the renewal of the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).

Foreign Minister Amr Musa said: "Intensive discussions and contacts are underway and there are proposals (to resolve the dispute), and it's certain that things are moving now."

Mr. Musa, who met his Israeli counterpart Shimon Peres in Paris at the weekend, said Israel had invited Egyptian experts to visit Israeli nuclear plants.

"Such proposals are on the table but I don't want to go into details," he said.

Israeli officials said earlier that Mr. Peres has been invited to Cairo "very soon" by Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak to try to find a formula to resolve the worst crisis in relations between the two countries since Israel's 1982 invasion of Lebanon.

Mr. Mubarak has rallied Arab countries to back his stand that Egypt will refuse

to sign the treaty when it comes up for renewal in mid-April unless Israel joins. And Israel steadfastly refuses to do so.

Mr. Musa said Egypt's position remained unchanged. Cairo was "concerned by the Israeli nuclear programme," he said.

However, one Israeli foreign ministry official said Monday: "Egypt knows full well that we will not sign."

The Jewish state has never confirmed or denied reports that it possesses around 200 nuclear warheads.

An Israeli government official accused Egypt of launching an "all-out war" over the dispute. He reiterated allegations by Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin last week that Egypt tried to influence Tanzania, Comoros and Djibouti not to establish ties with Israel.

"We have extremely reliable information that they are... trying to convince them to withhold the establishment of diplomatic ties with us," he said. "There was a direct

Egyptian approach to the local authorities."

President Mubarak last week denied the charges.

"Peres will go to Cairo very soon," the official told reporters, but did not name a date. "They misunderstand many things that we say and do. What we have to do is try to close this gap of misunderstanding."

The official disclosed that Egypt had rejected the Israeli proposal to offer Egyptian experts a "guided tour" of Israel's nuclear reactor at Nahal Sorek, near Tel Aviv, which is open to international inspection.

"They declined. They want Dimona," he said, referring to Israel's top-secret reactor in the south where it is widely believed to produce nuclear weapons.

Asked what other proposals Israel might make, the official said: "I cannot talk about the compromise because it is being negotiated right now."

Ekeus: Iraq is cooperative

BAGHDAD (AFP) — U.N. disarmament chief Rolf Ekeus met Iraqi officials here Monday in a bid to speed up Baghdad's compliance with U.N. resolutions on eliminating weapons of mass destruction.

A spokesman for Mr. Ekeus said the Iraqis were proving "very cooperative" on providing the United Nations with information on its weapons programme — a U.N. critic in the past.

"I think there was agreement on what should be achieved," was all Mr. Ekeus would say after talks, which began here Sunday.

Mr. Ekeus, the head of the U.N. Special Commission (UNSCOM) on disarming Iraq, visited the commission's Baghdad centre for long-term monitoring of military sites which he set up during his last visit here in October.

He was holding two rounds of talks Monday with the head of Iraq's Military Industrialisation Organisation, General Amer Mohammad Rashid, whom he first met on Sunday.

Political talks would start on Tuesday, said Mr. Ekeus, without specifying whom he

would meet.

Mr. Ekeus has said he wants Iraq to comply more quickly with key parts of U.N. Resolution 687, which set ceasefire terms in the 1991 Gulf war, after a U.S.-led multinational coalition drove Iraqi troops out of Kuwait.

The resolution provides for a lifting of the oil embargo, imposed along with other sanctions after Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in August 1990, once the United Nations is assured Baghdad's weapons of mass destruction have been eliminated.

Iraq says it has complied with U.N. demands on disarmament.

Unlike past visits when Mr. Ekeus was bitterly denounced, the Iraqi press has made little comment on the latest U.N. mission.

But an Iraqi official on Monday strongly denied a British newspaper report that Iraq was hiding missiles and biological weapons from U.N. inspectors.

Abdul Razak Al Hashimi, head of foreign relations for the ruling Bath Party, said the Sunday Times report was "certainly entirely false."

"Articles spreading disin-

formation about Iraq always come before the U.N. Security Council reviews sanctions," Mr. Hashimi said in Athens.

In December, Mr. Ekeus said in a report that Baghdad had made significant progress in meeting U.N. disarmament conditions, but said Iraqi leaders had also tried to hide information on their past biological and chemical weapons programme.

"We had some steady progress. It is too slow... I think we should try to go more quickly" in the talks with the Iraqis, he told reporters who had asked about the lack of information on weapons on Sunday.

He is leading a large delegation with experts in various fields, including Russian Nikita Smidovich, who has headed several missions to investigate Iraqi ballistic weapons in the past.

Mr. Ekeus is to present an oral report to the U.N. Security Council which is to review the sanctions at its two-monthly session in March. In April he will send a written report to the body.



KING HOSTS IFTAR: His Majesty King Hussein on Monday hosted an iftar in honour of tribal leaders and representatives of private and public sector institutions in Tafleeh Governorate. The banquet was attended by His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, Prime Minister Sharif Zeid

Ben Shaker, Royal Court Chief Marwan Al Qasbi, Chief Chamberlain Prince Ra'd Ben Zaid, several of the King's advisors, the imam of the Royal Court and the Tafleeh governor. The King and the guests performed Al Maghreb prayers together (Petra photo)

Controversy over opposition visit to Syria appears to be resolved

All parties agree to abide by and respect law

By Sa'eda Kilani
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — A tussle between the government and eight opposition groups, which sent a joint delegation on a controversial visit to Syria last month, appeared to have been settled after the minister of interior met with representatives of the 23 registered political parties. During the meeting it was agreed that the law governing political organisations in the country should be fully respected by everybody.

Spokesmen for the opposition groups which were in the team that visited Syria said they explained to the minister that during the visit they only repeated their declared position, which is opposed to the peace treaty with Israel, but did not attack Jordan while making the visit.

"The minister accepted our explanation and we believe 'the hatchet is now buried,' said Ya'coub Zayadin, secretary general of the Jordanian Communist Party.

The minister was not available for comment on Monday, but he had indicated in a statement after the Sunday meeting that the government would not pursue the issue.

"We have clarified our stand at the Ministry of Interior that we will take the appropriate legal steps if violations occurred in the future," Salameh Hammad was quoted as saying by Al Dustour daily.

Eleven members of eight political parties were represented in the delegation that visited Damascus in late January upon the invitation of the central leadership of the Progressive National Front.

The visit, heavily criticised by mainstream Jordanian politicians, was "only intended to join efforts of two parties who meet on common ground," said Dr. Zayadin.

Tayseer Zibri, secretary general of the Jordanian Democratic Popular Party, said the meeting with the Syrians dealt with the basic principles that the Jordanian opposition and Syria agree on. While the eight parties agree on the princi-

ple of peace with Israel they oppose the Sept. 13 Oslo accord and the Jordanian-Israeli treaty, he said.

According to Dr. Zayadin, the Jordan-Israeli treaty lacks fundamental elements. "It does not restore to us our full rights in water. It gives the right to the Israelis to use our lands... our fertile lands, and launches a partnership agreement that was not even signed with an Arab country."

"It was also done unilaterally," Dr. Zayadin said.

Dr. Zayadin said the timing and the manner in which the treaty was signed brought along "lots of disappointments."

"Not only was it done hastily and unilaterally but also it fell short of fulfilling the people's aspirations and ambitions," he asserted. "Even the government's promises and assurances that the treaty will bring economic prosperity proved to be false," he said.

Mr. Hammad stopped short of commenting on or criticising the visit. Participants in Sunday's meeting

said he implied the government had some information that the invited Jordanian party leaders had tried to harm the Jordanian government.

"All of the information they obtained was false. We didn't insult or try to harm the Jordanian government in any way," said Dr. Zayadin. "What we said in Syria is not new. We have already said it several times in Jordan."

"The insults were directed at Israel and not at Jordan," he added.

But the secretary general of the mainstream Al Ahd Party, Abdul Hadi Al Majali, asked the minister during Sunday's meeting to enforce article 21 of the 1993 Political Parties Law that prohibits any relations with non-Jordanian parties or organisations.

"We are afraid if these violations continue they will influence the political parties process in the Kingdom," Mr. Majali said.

Mr. Majali called on the eight parties to issue a statement explaining their position "to put an end to all of the controversies

(Continued on page 7)

Tal: Israelis do not own land in Jordan

Opposition coalition pushes against repeal of laws

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The government on Monday categorically rejected allegations that Israelis owned land in Jordan.

The denial by Justice Minister Hisham Al Tal came as a coalition of 11 opposition groups called on Parliament to reject a government-proposed repeal of three laws that call for the boycott of all dealings with Israel and prohibit the sale of land to Israelis.

"There is nowhere in Jordanian records any land owned by Israel or Israelis" in Jordan, Mr. Tal told the Jordan Times, noting that approval by the Council of Ministers was essential for any sale of Jordanian land to any non-Jordanian to become legally binding.

Mr. Tal was commenting on press reports that said that Israelis owned "large plots of Jordanian land" in the south and north and the ownership was recorded in Jordanian registers.

The Kingdom's laws permit foreigners to buy land within municipal boundaries with cabinet approval and forbid the sale of farmlands to non-Jordanians.

Mr. Tal's comments also came amid uncorroborated reports in the weeklies of some political parties —

which oppose the Oct. 26 Jordan-Israel peace treaty — that Israelis were flocking to places like Madaba and other areas to buy Jordanian land. None of the reports, however, cited specific details of any of the purported transactions.

The call meanwhile on Parliament to reject the repeal of laws was the latest move by the Jordanian opponents of the Middle East peace process who have vowed to fight "normalisation" of Jordanian-Israeli relations under the peace treaty.

His Majesty King Hussein reiterated this week that Jordan was fully committed to abiding by the provisions of the treaty and was determined to implement its provisions, which include normal relations with Israel.

Mr. Tal noted that Jordan was "obliged under the treaty to repeal the laws that contradict the state of peace with Israel."

Mr. Tal said the government was proposing that the three laws — a 1973 law that prohibits the sale of real estate to Israelis, a 1958 law that calls for the total economic boycott of Israel and a 1953 law that forbids trade with Israel — be repealed. These three laws specify Israel by name.

In addition, the govern-



Hisham Al Tal

ment is proposing a new draft law that will empower the Council of Ministers to define any party/country as an enemy of the state, Mr. Tal told the Jordan Times.

This law would supersede any Jordanian legislation that bans dealing with Israel at any level, economic, political or cultural, and cites Israel by name or otherwise as an enemy of the state.

Mr. Tal noted that the 1973 law against the sale of land to Israelis was aimed at discouraging Palestinians from selling land to Israelis. Since Jordan severed its legal and administrative links with the West Bank in 1988, the law has been redundant and no longer has

any meaning, the minister pointed out.

The two other laws also cite Israel by name and, as such, need to be abrogated in the spirit of peace between the two countries.

Officials and observers note that the repeal of the laws is also a prerequisite for launching joint projects and reaping the economic benefits of peace.

It was not known when Parliament, which starts its annual summer recess on Tuesday and which could be called for an extraordinary session in May/June, would take up the proposed motion.

However, it is widely expected that the motion would be approved by the 80-seat Lower House of Parliament where proponents of the peace treaty hold a majority. The treaty itself was approved with a 55-23 vote in the House in November.

The opposition coalition, made up mostly of Islamists and leftist groups as well as pan-Arab parties, made its call on Parliament to reject the government motion in a message addressed to the speaker and members of the House, where the opposition roughly equals the same number of votes against the treaty.

"The abrogation of the

(Continued on page 7)

Britons get 'plus' in future Iraq ties

BAGHDAD (AFP) — British businessmen said Sunday they would report to their government about a landmark trip to Baghdad and voiced sympathy for the Iraqi people hit by the crippling U.N. sanctions which are backed by London.

A spokesman for the delegation, Edmund Sykes, said "the Iraqis have said to us that whoever can help them today will get a plus" in future ties between the two countries and promised to find ways to supply humanitarian aid.

But he could not promise how his mission would affect the British government, which along with the United States, is the fiercest opponent to lifting the sanctions imposed after the 1990 invasion of Kuwait.

"We are purely an industry body, we are not backed by the British government. My report will go to the government. If they wish to take notice of it they will, if they don't they won't there is nothing I can do about it," he said.

The group of representatives from 27 British companies are on the first trip to Iraq since the 1990-1991 Gulf crisis.

It was organised amid great secrecy and has been sanctioned by the British government.

Relations have been cut since the January-February 1991 Gulf war in which Britain took part in the U.S.-led coalition which routed Iraqi forces from Kuwait.

"My impression is that the Iraqi people are being hurt very much by the sanctions," Mr. Sykes said.

Libya said to seek stake in Lonrho conglomerate

LONDON (R) — British tycoon Tony Rowland said on Sunday Libya wanted to buy a 10 per cent stake in Lonrho Plc, the mining and hotel group, but that the controversial bid made no sense in the face of international sanctions.

Libya has been an economic outcast since the United Nations imposed sanctions in response to the 1988 bombing of Pan Am airliner over Lockerbie, Scotland.

But now, reports have emerged that Libya's foreign investment agency wants to buy into Lonrho, in which Mr. Rowland holds a small stake. As well as mining and hotels, Lonrho also has refining, agricultural and general trading interests.

Although Mr. Rowland called the Libyan plan genuine, the flamboyant executive told Reuters he had no intention of selling his six per cent share in the global conglomerate.

"It (the proposal) is no doubt genuine," said the Lonrho board director, who recently returned from a visit to Libya.

But any Libyan shareholding would be of limited value as it would carry no voting rights due to the sanctions, he added.

"It just did not make sense," Mr. Rowland said.

Leotard slams Iran, Iraq, Libya and Syria

PARIS (R) — French Defence Minister Francois Leotard made unusually strong attacks on Iran, Iraq, Libya and Syria at a conference on Sunday on peace in the Mediterranean, saying the first three were most responsible for regional instability.

He rebuked Syria for its hold over Lebanon, comparing it to the control exercised over unempowered minors.

Mr. Leotard began in a back-handed fashion when he said it was unfortunate the Arab-Israeli peace process was dominated by the United States rather than Europe.

"It is also unfortunate the process does not include a certain amount of countries who are those mostly responsible for the region's instability — Libya, Iraq and Iran," he said.

"They are characterised by seeking weapons of mass destruction... strategic weapons aimed at making them regional powers with destabilising capacities."

He said all three sought increased numbers of long-range ballistic missiles and Iraq also purchased submarines.

"The ambitions of these countries can destabilise the region. I refer to Iran which continues to brandish the speech of Islamic revolution and help terrorism. And I do not forget Iraq's recurrent threat against Israel," he said.

Referring to human rights, Mr. Leotard said: "Don't we see that external aggressiveness is proportional to internal violence. Iraq, Iran and Libya are vivid proof of this."

On France's role in the 1990 Gulf war to expel Iraqi troops from Kuwait, he said: "France wishes to show there is no contradiction between



RABBI LAID TO REST: Ultra orthodox Jews carrying the body of 85-year-old Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Auerbach during a large funeral of one of Israel's best known Talmudic leaders. Rabbi Auerbach died from a heart attack. Israel radio called it the biggest funeral the country had ever seen as black clad masses of orthodox Jews flocked the hillside of Givat Shaul cemetery (AFP photo)

Social Democrats resign from Turkish cabinet

ANKARA (Agencies) — The 12 social democratic ministers in Prime Minister Tansu Ciller's coalition government submitted their resignations Monday following the merger of their party with Turkey's main opposition group.

The decision was taken at a final meeting of the 12 ministers from the People's Social Democratic Party (SHP), which merged into the opposition People's Republican Party (CHP) on Saturday, party officials said.

They said Vice Premier Murat Karayalcin, who is also foreign minister, would present the resignations to the new leader of the CHP, former SHP Foreign Minister Hikmet Cetin.

Mr. Cetin said over the weekend that the former Social Democratic deputies would not seek to bring down the Ciller government and negotiations are expected to begin later this week on whether the realigned CHP will join in a new coalition cabinet with Ms. Ciller's right-wing True Path Party.

All 12 outgoing ministers were expected to remain in their jobs pending the outcome of the negotiations.

The Social Democrat-True Path coalition was formed in November 1991 and reconfirmed after Ms. Ciller was elected True Path leader in June 1993.

Mr. Cetin, who was replaced as foreign minister in July, defined his major political aim at the weekend as the creation of a unified and strong centre-left in Turkish politics.

As foreign minister, Mr. Cetin is credited with having established good links with Turkey's former Soviet republics, and also winning German and French support for a ban on the outlawed separatist Kurdish Labour Party (PKK).

In particular, he has consistently spoken of the need to distinguish between "PKK terrorists" and the issue of Kurdish identity, which he insists is "recognised in Turkey," despite European fears Ankara is violating the rights of its Kurds.

The merger comes with the government under attack for its economic policies amid a recession and could destabilise the coalition.

The SHP and CHP decided to join forces last September in a bid to stop popular support waning after their poor showing in municipal elections last March.

Although some political analysts argued that the latest developments required the government's resignation, Ms. Ciller and Mr. Cetin reportedly hope to avoid that by making a major cabinet shuffle and then asking parliament for a vote of confidence.

Ms. Ciller is keen on trying to avoid any political crises while intense negotiations are underway with the European Union to sign a customs union agreement on March 6.

The government also faces growing pressure from opposition parties for early elections because of the country's growing economic and political problems, with annual inflation running 160 per cent.

The army is engaged in a war with the autonomy-seeking PKK guerrillas, which seriously damages Turkey's human rights image.



Hikmet Cetin

George Nicolaou, the president of the Assize court, said Monday the defence's objection was unprecedented in Cyprus. He said he had to adjourn to give the defence and the prosecution more time to consult on the procedure to be followed in hearing the "unique" objection.

The men were arrested Sept. 13 and charged with killing Louise Jensen, 23, a tour guide of Hirthals, northern Denmark, after kidnapping her in the tourist resort of Ayia Napa.

The soldiers are privates Alan Ford, 26, of Birmingham; Justin Fowler, 26, of Falmouth, Cornwall; and Jeff Parnell, 23, of Oldbury, West Midlands.

Even though this was their 17th appearance in court since their arrest in September, the trio has yet to enter pleas to charges of manslaughter.

This has been delayed by a series of legal objections and complications referred to the supreme court which ruled last week that the case can proceed.

Police said the three have admitted kidnapping and killing Ms. Jensen, whose battered body was found buried in a shallow grave two days after her abduction.

When arrested at a police roadblock hours after Ms. Jensen's boyfriend reported her abduction, the soldiers had bloodstains on their clothes. A blood-covered shovel was found in their car.

All three serve with the Royal Greenjackets Regiment at the British sovereign base area of Dhekelia in south Cyprus.

They sat impassively in the dock Monday, listening to legal arguments in Greek, which were translated into English for their benefit.

Cyprus trial of 3 Britons adjourned

LARNACA (AP) — The trial of three British soldiers accused of murdering a Danish woman was postponed again Monday.

The three-member Assize court rescheduled the trial for March 2, when defence lawyers are expected to press for the dismissal of the case and the release of the defendants.

The defence claims that the confiscation by a prison guard of confidential notes two of the defendants had prepared for their lawyers was illegal.

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NEWS IN BRIEF

Qatari ship with sugar arrives in Iraq

BAGHDAD (AFP) — A Qatari ship loaded with 2,500 tonnes of sugar arrived in Umm Qasr on Sunday, the first boat from a Gulf Arab country to dock in an Iraqi port since U.N. sanctions were imposed in August 1990. The official agency INA said the boat had anchored in Umm Qasr, 600 kilometres southeast of Baghdad. The gift was to "relieve the human tragedy of the Iraqi people," Qatar's news agency QNA said Thursday when the ship Zarga left the port of Doha. Oil and trade sanctions were imposed by the U.N. Security Council when Iraq invaded Kuwait in 1990, but do not include food and medicines. Qatar is one of the few Gulf Arab monarchies to still have good relations with Iraq. A Sudanese ship which arrived in May 1994 in Basra was the first Arab boat to dock at an Iraqi port since the start of the sanctions, INA said.

Prisoners ask for more food for Ramadan

KUWAIT CITY (AFP) — More than 1,000 people awaiting deportation here demanded better meals for the Holy Month of Ramadan saying in a letter Sunday that they were going hungry. In a letter to the Al Sayesah daily, the prisoners held at the Talha deportation centre in Jubail Al Shaiukh in the north of the Kuwait City, said they were getting one date a day, with some lentil soup and beans cooked in camphor oil. Many of them were suffering from malnutrition, and they called on charity groups to provide better meals during the month of dawn-to-dusk fasting which ends in early March. The letter added that at least 1,200 detainees were being held at the centre. Earlier this month Deputy Ali Al Bagli said more than 535 detainees of several nationalities were being held at the centre. In 1994 the government deported 122 Iraqis and nationals of countries which supported Iraq in the January-February 1991 Gulf war mainly Yemenis and Jordanians, a U.S. State Department human rights report said earlier this month. Kuwait also routinely deports Iranians and other foreign nationals who have violated residency requirements or committed other offenses.

6 girls die in Iran fire

NICOSIA (AP) — Six schoolgirls were killed in a fire that broke out Sunday at their school in northwestern Iran, the Islamic Republic News Agency reported. The agency, monitored in Cyprus, quoted the local police chief in Rasht, 240 kilometres from Tehran, as saying the blaze was caused by a kerosene stove that tipped over. The dead girls were aged between 11 and 12, IRNA added. Some 135 of their schoolmates were saved.

Kurdish rebels killed in 2-day clash rises to 51

DIYARBAKIR (AP) — The number of Kurdish guerrillas killed by troops in a two-day offensive in southeastern Turkey rose Sunday to 51, a report said. Turkish troops killed 38 Kurdish rebels Saturday in a clash in the Hani district, a rural area of the Diyarbakir province. Two Turkish soldiers were also killed in the fighting. A further 13 guerrillas were killed in clashes that ended Sunday, said a dispatch from Interior Minister Nabit Metense, a total of 167 Kurdish rebels have been killed in battles with Turkish troops since the beginning of 1995. This figure rose to 180 after the latest fighting. There were no figures released on casualties for government forces. Kurdish guerrillas have been fighting for autonomy in southeastern Turkey since 1984. More than 15,000 people have been killed in the violence.

Infiltrators kill Bangladeshi in Kuwait

KUWAIT (AP) — A number of Iraqis have crossed into Kuwait, killed a Bangladeshi shepherd and stolen his sheep, a newspaper reported Monday. The daily Al Watan said the infiltration occurred Wednesday evening in an area called Bahrat Husban in northern Kuwait. They allegedly shot the shepherd in the back and the chest and made their way across the border taking the sheep with them. The shepherd's body was discovered Thursday. An Interior Ministry spokesman confirmed the report. The spokesman also confirmed another report by the paper that two Kuwaitis have been missed in the border area since Thursday. Ahmad Al Azim, 17, and Mohammed Al Azim, 20, gave a relative a ride to his military unit in the border area of Abadi and have never been heard of since. Kuwait has built a three-meter-deep defensive trench along the 210-kilometre border. But it has not stopped people straying into Iraq. The border that was recognised by Baghdad for the first time in November is patrolled by a battalion of armed United Nations peacekeepers.

UAE fund finances over 4,800 marriages

ABU DHABI (AFP) — A fund created by the United Arab Emirates (UAE) government three years ago to finance weddings between nationals has extended around 340 million dirhams (\$92.6 million) for more than 4,800 marriages. The Marriage Fund, in its first report published in local newspapers Monday, said 4,871 native men and women benefited from its grants since it was set up in 1992. "This means the fund has enabled 9,742 national men and women to marry," said the report, which was presented to the federal cabinet this week. "The marriages mean the creation of 4,871 new local families, which is an important national accomplishment even if each family produced one child." The fund was set up by President Sheikh Zayed Ben Sultan Al Nahayan with a capital of 80 million dirhams (\$21.8 million) before it was gradually raised to 250 million dirhams (\$68.1 million). It provides loans of up to 70,000 dirhams (\$19,073) for each would-be local bridegroom provided he is single and his bride is also a UAE national. The fund was set up to help local meet rocketing wedding costs, which can exceed \$100,000, and encourage them to have children as part of attempts to boost the national population.

Man kills sister

By Rana Hussein
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — An 18-year-old woman Sunday was stabbed to death by her brother shortly after being released from prison where she served a six-month sentence for "immoral" behaviour and becoming pregnant out of wedlock, an official source said.

Sonia A.M. was stabbed several times in the stomach and chest by her brother Mohammad A. who surrendered to police shortly after the killing, the source, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said.

The brother said he was angry because his sister had become pregnant out of wedlock and he was ashamed of her. He said he had been in prison for the same reason.

Crown Prince appoints private secretary

AMMAN (J.T.) — His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan has appointed Mr. Rifaa Rida as his private secretary. Mr. Rida holds a B.A. in political science from the University and an M.A. in international relations from Cambridge University. He is currently serving at the Royal Court since 1991.

Malaysia seeks nurses

AMMAN (Petra) — The Health Ministry said it received a request from the government of Malaysia expressing interest in employing Jordanian nurses to work in Malaysian hospitals. Candidates must be English and have at least three years of experience.

New medical scholarship established

AMMAN — The King Hussein Medical Centre, in cooperation with Hikma Pharmaceuticals, has established the King Hussein Medical Scholarship for the purpose of training young Arab physicians in "one of the medical centres in the region," a Hikma spokesman said.

Israeli planes attack

(Continued from page 12)

intervene to stop the Israeli attacks.

"The guns and missiles of Israel are not only destroying the houses and properties of the Lebanese people but they are destroying the chances of peace in the Middle East," the Syrian government daily Tahreef said.

"This is a clear message to the international parties who are sponsoring the peace process. This message should be countered with the appropriate response through international institutions," it said.

Early Monday the Iranian-backed Hizbollah guerrillas fired anti-tank rockets and several artillery rounds at a position of Israel's proxy South Lebanon Army (SLA) militia in Sojed on the outskirts of the Israeli-occupied zone.

Lebanese Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri accused Israel of "destroying homes in South Lebanon and driving the Lebanese population into exodus, to force Lebanon and Syria to give in to its demands in the peace process."

WHAT'S GOING ON

Film (in Arabic) entitled "Furqan" at Abdul Hameed Shoman Foundation at 7:00 p.m.

PLAYS

Play (in Arabic) entitled "You Are Not Yourself" at the Royal Cultural Centre at 9:00 p.m.

Play (in Arabic) entitled "The Mask" at the Royal Cultural Centre at 8:00 p.m.

NEWS

ABC News Highlights and McNeil-Lehrer News Hour at the American Center at 2:30 p.m.

EXHIBITIONS

Exhibition of oil paintings by Sahab Ibrahim at Al Bayraq Art Gallery, Sports City Intersection (Tel. 688701).

Exhibition of handicrafts by Hasmig Kuyumjian at the Royal Cultural Centre.

Photo exhibition at the Friends of Archaeology Centre.

"Young America" exhibit (with photographs featuring Americans of all ages) at the American Center.

Exhibition of works by Qasim Al Samir at the Housing Bank Complex Gallery.

JORDAN TELEVISION	
Tel: 773111-19	
PROGRAMME TWO	
17:00	Cocottes Minutes
17:30	Que Le Mielleur Gagne
18:00	Des Irains Pas Comme Les Austre
19:00	News in French
19:15	Portrait
19:30	Profiles of the Muslim World
19:45	Home Improvement
20:15	Road to Avonlea
21:10	Equinox
22:00	News in English
22:30	Watergate
23:59	Feature film: "Wacky Taxi"
PRAYER TIMES	
04:52	Fajr
06:09	(Sunrise) Dhuhr
11:49	Asr
15:06	Maghreb
18:47	Isha
CHURCHES	
St. Mary of Nazareth Church Swithead, Tel. 810740	
Assemblies of God Church, Tel. 632785	
St. Joseph Church Tel. 624590	
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 637440	
De la Salle Church Tel. 661757	
Terrasanta Church Tel. 623366	
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 623541	
Anglican Church Tel. 630851, Tel. 623543	
Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 771331	
Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 775261	
St. Ephraim Church Tel. 771751	
Armenian International Church Tel. 625256	
Evangelical Lutheran Church Tel. 824328	
German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel. 664195	
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints Tel. 654932	
Church of Nazareth Tel. 675591	
The Evangelical Local Church in Amman Tel. 811295	
WEATHER	
Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology.	
A depression will affect the Kingdom, making temperatures drop. Rainfall is expected in the north, extending later in the day to all other regions. Skies will be partly cloudy to cloudy and winds southeasterly. In Aqaba, winds will be southerly moderate and seas rough.	

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

Min./Max. temp.	6/12	Alquds pharmacy	(—)	Jordan Electricity Authority	815615	IRBID:	
Amman	11/21	ZARQA:		Electric Power		Princess Basma Hospital	(02)275555
Aqaba	11/21	Dr. Ziyad J'alim	(—)	Rescue Police	636381	Greek Catholic Hospital	(02)272725
Deserts	4/14	Khalifah pharmacy	98417	RJ Flight Information	08-53300	Ibn Al Nafies Hospital	(02)247100
Jordan Valley	10/19			Queen Alia Intl. Airport	08-53300	AQABA:	
						Princess Haya Hospital	(03)341101

Yesterday's high temperatures: Amman 17, Aqaba 24, Humidity readings: Amman 24 per cent, Aqaba 35 per cent.

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY

AMMAN:

Dr. Ghaleb Zawalidh 734011

Dr. Abdul Hadi Tayim 620115

Dr. Khalidoun Asfour 699440

Dr. Adnan Zaghloul 898140

Firas pharmacy 661912

Ferdous pharmacy 783336

Al Asma pharmacy 637055

Nairokh pharmacy 623672

Al Salam pharmacy 636739

Yacoub pharmacy 649495

Shmeisani pharmacy 637660

Nairokh pharmacy 623672

Najib pharmacy 847632

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre 637111

Civil Defence Department 661111

Civil Defence Immediate Rescue 630341

Civil Defence Emergency 637779

Rescue Police 199, 621111, 637779

Fire Brigade 617101

Blood Bank 773121

Highway Police 843402

Traffic Police 896390

Public Security Department 638331

Hotel Complaints 695800

Price Complaints 661176

Water and Sewerage Complaints 897467

Amman Municipality Complaints 787111

Telephone Information (directory assistance) 121

Overseas Calls 010230

Central Amman Telephone 832310

Abdali Telephone Repair 661101

Jordan Television 773111

Radio Jordan 774111

Water Authority 689103

HOSPITALS

AKILAH MATERNITY, J. Amn. 642441/2

Jabal Amman Maternity 642362

Malhas, J. Amman 636140

Palestine, Shmeisani 664171/4

Shmeisani Hospital 669131

University Hospital 348485

Al-Masrah Hospital 967222/9

The Islamic, Abdali 666173/7

Al-Ahli, Abdali 666164/6

Italian, Al-Muhajerin 777101/3

Al-Basrah, J. Ashrafieh 775111/26

Army, Abdali 894111/5

Ousein Alfi Hospital 668100

Amal Hospital 674155

ZARQA:

Zarqa Govt. Hospital (09)863233

Zarqa National Hospital (09)900560

Ibn Sina Hospital (09)986732

Al Hikma Modern Hospital (09)690950

FOR THE TRAVELLER

QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

This information is supplied by Royal Jordanian (RJ) information department at the Queen Alia International Airport Tel. (08)533000-5, where it should always be verified.

ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights (Terminal 1)

04:30 Jakarta, Kuala Lumpur (RJ)

07:00 ————— Damascus (RJ)

09:15 ————— Aqaba (RJ)

09:55 ————— Dhahran (RJ)

09:55 ————— Muscat, Doha (RJ)

10:15 ————— Doha, Bahrain (RJ)

16:50 ————— Cairo (RJ)

17:00 ————— London, Frankfurt (RJ)

17:30 ————— Chicago, Amsterdam (RJ)

Mexico rebels press demand for army withdrawal from Chiapas

Anti-rebel protesters clash with archbishop's supporters

LOS ALTOS, Mexico (AFP) — Zapatista rebels again demanded that federal troops be pulled back from the guerrillas' Chiapas state stronghold, saying that condition for new peace talks would not be dropped.

"The government does not want to solve the conflict, what it wants is to annihilate us," the rebels said in a statement. "It wanted to buy us out, but now it wants to destroy us, and will fail again."

The statement released in Los Altos de Chiapas was attributed to Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN) leader Subcomandante Marcos, but was signed by EZLN officials Major Ana Maria and Commanders David and Javier.

It said the rebel force "confirms its will to engage in dialogue," but said an "indispensable requirement" was for federal troops to "return to their original positions of February 8" before President Ernesto Zedillo ordered a crackdown to nab the EZLN leadership.

Mr. Zedillo Friday rejected the rebels' original demand that Mexican troops be rolled back.

Despite recent overtime aimed at bringing the rebels back to the negotiating table, Mr. Zedillo made it clear in a speech to union leaders the government would no longer tolerate a rebel safe haven in Mexican territory.

Mr. Zedillo stressed that the government had reestablished "full sovereignty" in those areas where federal authority, where the Mexican state was absent for nearly 14 months.

"With all clarity I reiterate today: The government will not again indicate our constitutional responsibility to preserve the sovereignty of our territory," he said.

The EZLN first rose up against the federal government on Jan. 1, 1994 demanding better living conditions for the indigenous majority in Chiapas, and then pressed for national democratic reform.

Since their revolt began, the guerrillas have operated unchallenged in the Lacandon jungle near the Guatemalan border.

Last week, Mr. Zedillo sent government troops into the area with orders to arrest rebel leaders, including Subcomandante Marcos.

But on Tuesday Mr. Zedillo shifted course, ordering the military to avoid clashes and offering the rebels amnesty if they set down their weapons and become a legal political parties.

At the same time, the governor of Chiapas stepped down, meeting a key condition of the rebels, who had charged he had been elected by fraud.

On Thursday, the EZLN acknowledged Mr. Zedillo's call for new talks but demanded the army move back.

"I firmly ratify my conviction that in Chiapas the solution is through the political path," Mr. Zedillo said Friday, "but also (it is) through the observance of the law."

Earlier Sunday in the town of San Cristobal de Las Casas, Chiapas, hundreds of anti-rebel protesters clashed with supporters of the controversial Roman Catholic archbishop.

Police did not intervene as about 500 members of the conservative San Cristobal Civic Front hurled stones and clubs at the windows of town's cathedral and fought with supporters of Archbishop Samuel Ruiz who had formed a "peace belt" around the building, witnesses said.

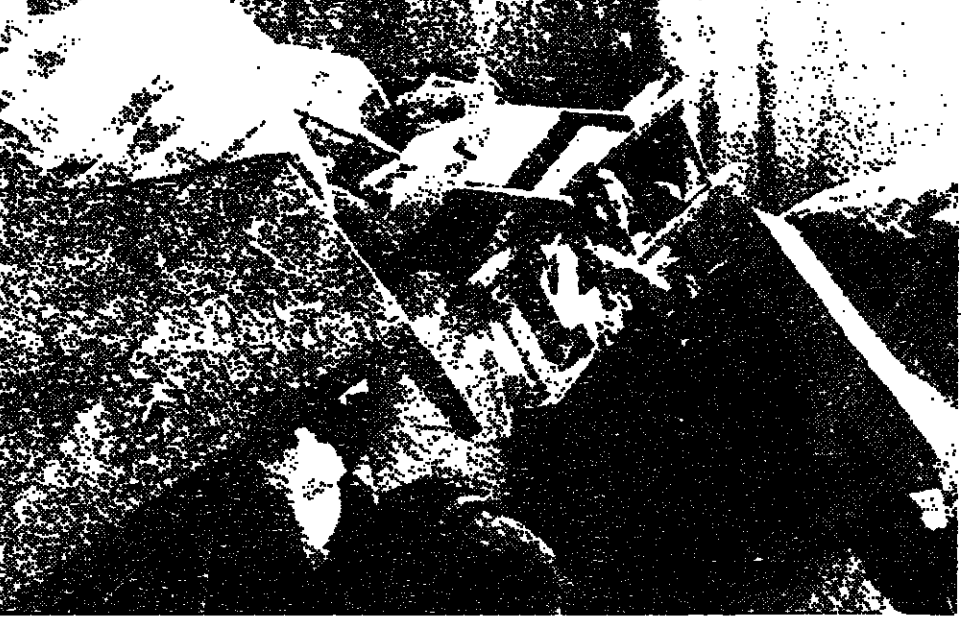
The right-wing protesters, who called their demonstration for Army Day, chanted, "Chiapas want reconciliation. Ruiz is division, violence and death."

The 35-year veteran of the San Cristobal diocese has been heading a mediation team called the National Intermediation Commission that is attending talks between the government and Zapatista National Liberation Army rebels.

Injuries were reported on both sides.

Arch. Ruiz, 70, has a reputation here as a defender of the "poorest of the poor." He has also been reviled as a Marxist.

His attempt to mediate a 13-month conflict in this poor rural state further angered his detractors among this city's agricultural, political and business elite. They have insisted he give up the mediation post while the Zapatistas consider his participation vital.



Supporters of San Cristobal Archbishop, Samuel Ruiz, shield themselves from stones and clubs being hurled by right-wing protesters outside the cathedral of San Cristobal (AFP photo)

Ramos to defend Spratlys; former advisor says they're not worth it

MANILA (AP) — In a clear reference to Chinese intrusions in the contested Spratly Islands, President Fidel Ramos has promised to defend the nation's sovereignty and urged foreign intruders to leave.

"As your commander-in-chief, I will not allow any slackening in our defence," Mr. Ramos told alumni of the Philippine Military Academy Sunday. "...If there be any intruders into our territory or exclusive economic zone, we shall ask them to depart and leave us in peace."

Last week, Mr. Ramos, a former defence secretary, ordered additional troops to the Spratlys after the Philippine military reported Chinese incursions in portions of the mineral-rich chain claimed by Manila.

The South China Sea islands are also claimed by Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei and Taiwan. Philippine officials claim the Chinese have built a platform on the Pangasinan Reef and that they detained Filipino fishermen briefly last month.

Filipino officials believe China, which claims all the Spratlys, is testing the resolve of other claimants by making incursions in Philippine-claimed areas because this country has one of the weakest military forces in South East Asia.

The Philippines has increased air surveillance over the Spratlys using its best fighter interceptors — five Korean war-vintage F-5 jets. In addition, 28 patrol ships and one cargo vessel have been sent to Palawan Island in the western Philippines to augment routine patrols.

The Philippines claims China has violated a 1992 South East Asian declaration calling for peaceful resolution of the territorial dispute. China has offered bilateral talks on developing the Spratlys but the Philippines has refused because that would leave open the question of sovereignty.

On Saturday, one of the country's most distinguished military figures urged the government to drop its claim because it is not worth the trouble.

"If one of our soldiers there gets killed, even accidentally, what are we supposed to do?" former Defence Secretary Rafael Iletto told reporters.

Gen. Iletto, a West Point graduate, World War II combat veteran and former chief of staff, served as defence secretary and later as national security adviser under President Corason Aquino.

Leftists also have warned that the government's "confrontational" position placed the country at risk of a war it cannot afford. They also suggested that the saber-rattling was meant to coerce Congress into allocating funds for the military's modernisation programme.

Congress last week approved a 50 billion peso (\$2 billion) budget to strengthen the armed forces.

Marchers demonstrate for access to royal pathway at Windsor Castle

WINDSOR, England (AP) — Three hundred people marched through private grounds of Windsor Castle Sunday, demanding access to a stretch of pathway that is set aside for the royal family.

Twenty people were arrested in the demonstration, organised by campaigners against a new law, the Criminal Justice Act, which treats trespass on private property as a crime.

The crown insisted that public access would compromise royal security, but by arrangement with the Royal Household, the demonstrators were allowed to march on the one-and-a-half mile (2.5 km) stretch of towpath by the River Thames.

The section of pathway through the castle grounds is part of a 180-mile (290 km) Thames riverside walk route.

Dixie Dean, spokeswoman for the Coalition Against the Criminal Justice Act, said: "This is a public right of way."

"The queen has refused ramblers access to this stretch of pathway citing security reasons..."

"The Criminal Justice Act makes it a criminal offense to trespass on private land but we feel we have a right to walk in the countryside whenever we choose without having to suffer arrest and harassment."

A Thames Valley Police spokesman said later that 20 people were arrested for public order offenses. Police estimated about 300 protesters took part, and there were 400 officers on duty.



A protester being led away by police during a demonstration against the Criminal Justice Act on the Queen's Crown Estate Property in Windsor. Twenty people were arrested in the protest held to persuade the queen to open up to the public a footpath in the castle grounds running along the Thames (AFP photo)

Portugal's new PSD leader rejects early polls

LISBON (R) — Defence Minister Fernando Nogueira rejected the idea of early general elections after he became leader of Portugal's ruling Social Democrat Party (PSD) in succession to Prime Minister Anibal Cavaco Silva.

Mr. Nogueira, 44, beat Foreign Minister Jose Manuel Durao Barroso by 519 votes to 486 in a secret ballot of delegates to a three-day party congress in Lisbon. But Mr. Cavaco Silva will remain prime minister until parliamentary elections later this year.

Mr. Nogueira said in his victory speech that he would reject any move by President Mario Soares to bring forward the elections from October and would strive to maintain the PSD's unity.

He pledged to follow faithfully in the footsteps of Mr. Cavaco Silva, who has ruled Portugal with a firm hand for a decade.

"May God help me to build the country that you dreamed of," said Mr. Nogueira, who has served as Mr. Cavaco Silva's number two in both the government and PSD for several years.

Mr. Nogueira ridiculed opposition Socialist leader Antonio Guterres, saying he was a demagogue and false prophet incapable of offering genuine solutions to the country's problems.

"He says he can wipe out unemployment in two days whereas God took three to make the world," Mr. Nogueira said.

The new PSD leader promised a stable economic policy that would inspire market confidence and a hard line on reducing inflation from its current level of 4.5 per cent.

"It is essential to maintain a firm course with no zig-zags," he said.

Mr. Nogueira also pledged his commitment to a more integrated Europe, saying Portugal's future depended on this.

"We must participate actively and skilfully in the process of European construction," he said.

Mr. Cavaco Silva congratulated Mr. Nogueira on his win and expressed confidence in his leadership of the party.

"Fernando Nogueira is a serious person, someone with the capacity to be president of the Social Democrat Party."

Romania worried over ethnic Hungarian moves

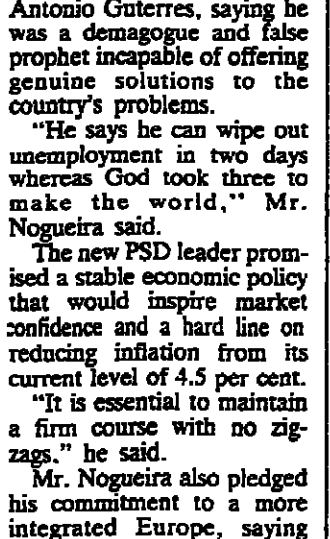
AMMAN (J.T.) — The Romanian government has expressed its "deep worry" that the recent action of the Democratic Union of Hungarians in Romania are part of a "programme meant to attain ethnic autonomy and running counter to the Romanian constitution, the laws in force regarding the local public administration and to the European regulations on the rights of minorities that would adversely affect the internal political life of a country," a press release received in Amman said.

"While the government respects the fact that the main political parties have made clear their positions, a sine qua non for the recognition and respect of ethnic identity, rights and freedoms stipulated in the constitution, it rejects any attempt at territorial autonomy based on ethnicity. Neither does the Romanian government share the extremist discriminatory statements targeting the Hungarian minority which run counter to the constitution and the national and international laws regarding minorities," the press release said.

The Romanian government firmly rejects any tendency to segregate society on ethnicity basis and to undermine the territorial sovereignty and integrity of the unitary national state, and will make no concessions to attempts at destabilising the political life, endangering the Romanian people's interests and affecting its coexistence with the minorities," the press release said.

"The government will use all legal means to defend the constitutional order and ensure the respect of rights and obligations of all citizens, in accordance with the national and international laws to which Romania adhered," the press release said.

While the executive authority will not interfere in the internal affairs of the political parties, it also will not condone the Hungarian party's attempt at altering the institutional structures of the country as established in its constitution."



U.S. President Bill Clinton (left) and Secretary of Veterans Affairs Jesse Brown (right) are joined by unidentified veterans during a ceremony in Arlington, Virginia, marking the 50th anniversary of the battle of Iwo Jima. President Clinton addressed veterans and their families commending the courage shown at the battle that cost one out of every three U.S. Marines his life (AFP photo)



Supporters of Chiapas controversial Archbishop Samuel Ruiz clash with anti-rebel protesters in front of the cathedral of San Cristobal, Mexico. Some 500 right-wing protesters chanted slogans against Arch. Ruiz while hurling stones and clubs at Arch. Ruiz's supporters who had formed a "peace belt" around the building (AFP photo)

Seat of Russian authority is hard to find

MOSCOW (AFP) — The real seat of power in Russia these days is becoming harder and harder to find, with President Boris Yeltsin appearing increasingly at the mercy of conflicting interest groups.

Inconsistency in Moscow's handling of the Chechnya rebellion highlighted fissures in Russia's power base and left analysts guessing as to who was really in charge — the National Security Council, the head of the Presidential Guard, the presidential counsellors or the economic-military lobbies.

Mr. Yeltsin's annual address to the nation last Thursday, according to one press commentator, was that of a leader forced to acknowledge that the state no longer functions and that he has no "strategy to put things right."

The president "finds himself in a position similar to that of Mikhail Gorbachev in his final years, hesitating among different forces and interests," commented a Russian political specialist.

A Western diplomat added that Mr. Yeltsin's speech "seemed divorced from reality."

For the moment, the consultative Security Council has become a kind of "politburo" to endorse Mr. Yeltsin's policies.

In the Chechen crisis all decisions appear to have been taken by ministers responsible for military affairs, notably Interior Minister Viktor Ierin, Defence Minister Pavel Grachev and counter-espionage chief Sergei Stepashin.

"The Russian leadership no longer has any need for parliament to back its decisions, as the leaders of the two chambers — Ivan Rybkin and Vladimir Shumeiko — are permanent members of the Security Council," said Sergei Parkhomenko, an analyst with the newspaper Sevdonia.

"No one is responsible and no one controls what is decided."

Another source of non-constitutional power lies with a group of presidential assistants under the direction of Viktor Ilyushin. While the assistants are officially considered consultants, they are the ones who in fact draft the presidential decrees that are beyond the reach of parliament.

Two of the most influential assistants, Georgy Satarov and Alexander Livshits, prepared Mr. Yeltsin's recent speech to the nation.

Also hovering around Mr. Yeltsin is a Presidential Guard led by Alexander Kojakov. Press reports recently disclosed that the guard has its own "analysis centre," which submits documents to the president on political, economic, military and press issues that in many instances re-appear as decrees.

Then there are powerful regional leaders, whose influence declined last year but who now wield considerable economic power.

"As the opposition begins to assert itself, as democrats are abandoning Mr. Yeltsin and as relations with the government deteriorate, the president again needs to be backed" by the regional chiefs, according to Mr. Parkhomenko.

It is this volatile mix of interests that Mr. Yeltsin is today trying to juggle — and which explains why he has hesitated to hold anyone accountable for the failures of the military operation in Chechnya.

But the balancing act cannot last much longer, particularly as the president must also listen to demands from the military, agricultural, energy and financial sectors.

Clinton salutes Iwo Jima's aging heroes

ARLINGTON, Virginia (AP) — Joined by aging heroes of Iwo Jima, President Bill Clinton honoured soldiers bloodied and killed 50 years ago in the savage World War II battle. "The dimensions of their struggle still stagger us," he said Sunday.

The president, in keynote remarks commemorating the 50th anniversary of the pivotal battle, paid tribute to four Iwo Jima survivors by name and urged Americans to honour the memories of all soldiers to fought for the tiny Pacific island.

"To be worthy of that sacrifice, we must determine in this time to remain the strongest nation in the world so that our freedom is never again threatened," Mr. Clinton told a crowd of about 3,000.

With the monuments of Washington visible through a misty haze over the Potomac River, the president said, "and we must work to create a nation worthy of the generation that saved it for our freedom."

He spoke beneath a 78-foot (24-metre) bronze statue depicting the famous wartime photograph of U.S. soldiers hoisting a flag atop Mount Suribachi. "Hard men wept when they saw the flag fly," Mr. Clinton said.

The Associated Press photo by Joe Rosenthal symbolised the nation's resolve, Mr. Clinton said. "Our country saw the true definition of courage."

The Battle of Iwo Jima, one of the nation's bloodiest, gave the United States an air base for long-range bombing missions against mainland Japan.

In 36 days, U.S. casualties numbered 26,000, including 6,821 dead. For the Japanese, the toll was even more gruesome. Of the island's 20,000 defenders, only 1,083 survived. Thousands of the dead are still missing, their bones hidden in the volcanic island's intricate web of tunnels.

Introducing the president, Medal of Honour winner Col. William E. Barber shared his memories of "that 8-mile (13-km) chunk of rock and volcanic ash." In a halting voice, he told dozens of fellow veterans in the crowd: "I am older now, as are you, but I can still see the colours of that February morning. The sky. The island. And sometimes I think I can still hear the noise of battle."



U.S. President Bill Clinton (left) and Secretary of Veterans Affairs Jesse Brown (right) are joined by unidentified veterans during a ceremony in Arlington, Virginia, marking the 50th anniversary of the battle of Iwo Jima. President Clinton addressed veterans and their families commending the courage shown at the battle that cost one out of every three U.S. Marines his life (AFP photo)

Roxette plays in Beijing

BEIJING (AP) — Roxette made a bit of cultural history Sunday — becoming the first major Western rock group to play in Beijing in a decade. A sell-out crowd of 10,000 sang along with the Swedish band's Marie Fredriksson, moved to the beat, yelled and pounded the benches for encores. Ticket prices ranged from 50 yuan to 600 yuan (\$6 to \$71). About 4,000 tickets went for the lowest price — about one-seventh of an average Beijing worker's salary — to make them more affordable for students. Roxette's music had preceded their first concert in China. The band sold 70,000 legitimate copies of their 1991 Joyride album in China and untold numbers of pirated copies. Roxette's set was largely the same as on other stops of their world tour, except that government censors demanded changing the lyrics Making Love To You to Making Up To You, EMI Record Company spokeswoman Marie Dimberg said. Pop has flooded China in the years since Wham caused a stir with its female dancers in scanty black leather in 1985. The capital now has music radio, music television and a handful of large new discos where young Chinese go to dance and relax. Hong Kong and Taiwan pop stars play here and have huge followings.

Scientists say first horseman was in Ukraine

ATLANTA (AP) — Six thousand years ago, a brave, unknown Ukrainian stuck a piece of bone in the mouth of a horse, attached a bridle, sat astride the animal and invented horsemanship. That's the conclusion of David Anthony, an anthropologist who searched for the origins of horsemanship by studying marks on the teeth of ancient horses in museums around the world. Learning to domesticate and ride horses marked a revolution in human civilisation, enabling humans at a time before the wheel to travel great distances and find new ways to live, Mr. Anthony said at the national meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. The ancient who first rode horses were a "scruffy people" who were forced to live in the river valleys of the Ukraine. Beyond the rivers, they were trapped by vast grasslands that defied easy travel on foot, Mr. Anthony said. "There were huge herds of horses then and the first use of those horses was to eat them," he said. "Horses to them (nearly Ukrainians) were like the buffalo to the American Indians." Mr. Anthony began searching for the origins of horsemanship by studying the teeth of modern horses, both wild and tame. He found that under an electron microscope the use of a bit — a bar placed in the teeth of horses — left a distinctive mark on the teeth. The scientist from Hartwick College in Oneonta, New York, then began studying the teeth from ancient horses that were in museums around the world. It was in a Russian collection that he found the earliest evidence for the use of a bit. Carbon dating placed the age of the horses at 4,000 B.C. Anthony said he experimented on modern horses with a number of materials that could have been used for that first bit, and determined that bone most closely matched the teeth marks found in the ancient specimens. "I'm sure the bit was used for riding," he said. "A bit is used to direct a horse from behind and this was before the invention of the wheel."

Vietnam police seize gems from illegal miners

HANOI (AFP) — Police fighting an illegal gem mining rush in central Vietnam have seized 18 kilograms (40 pounds) of sapphires from some of the 10,000 prospectors that have flooded into a highland area, an official said Monday. The gems were taken during the first phase of an operation to clear the illegal miners from a 42-square-kilometres (17-square-mile) area in mountainous Daklak province that has drawn huge crowds of prospectors since the beginning of the month, an official at the provincial industrial office said. Police have taken control of the area in Dien Nong district pending a decision from the government on the mining, the official said, although he added that illegal mining was still going on.

Paper: Mitterrand office bugged Pasqua

PARIS (R) — The office of President Francois Mitterrand bugged the phones of aides to his political opponent Charles Pasqua, who is now interior minister, on the eve of the 1986 general election, the daily Le Monde said Monday.

The daily said new evidence passed on to a judge showed an anti-terrorist unit headed by Mr. Mitterrand's Elysee Palace illegally listened in on Joel Gali-Papa, responsible at the time for relations between Mr. Pasqua's (RPR) party and the extreme-right National Front.

There was no immediate comment from the office of Mr. Mitterrand, a Socialist, who is due to step down in May when his mandate expires after 14 years in power.

Le Monde said investigative magistrate Jean-Paul Valat had received recording details in which the name of a hardline conservative Pasqua, who was a senator at the time, came up 11 times under the codename "charly."

Apart from Gali-Papa, two other Pasqua aides — Alain Robert and Gerard Ecorcheville — also had their phones tapped by the Elysee unit between September 1985 and March 1986, it said. The Socialists lost the March 1986 election.

Le Monde had reported at the weekend that police had more than 5,000 items recording details of relatives and friends of people whose phones were tapped, including lawyers, politicians and journalists in the mid-1980s.

The report gave a wider dimension to a scandal that broke two years ago. Mr. Mitterrand's ex-cabinet chief Gilles Menage and the former Pasqua aide — Alain Robert — were accused of favouring the far-right National Front.

Supporters of the far-right National Front, which won 15 per cent of the vote in the 1986 election, were accused of favouring the far-right National Front.

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U.S. Republican

MANCHESTER, New Hampshire (R) — Nine Republican presidential aspirants kicked off the 1996 U.S. presidential campaign Sunday with a frenetic day of political activity in New Hampshire, the state which can make or break presidential dreams.

The nine responded to an invitation from the New Hampshire Republican Party to address some 1,400 activists Sunday evening for six minutes each.

Leading the field was Senate majority leader Bob Dole, the most senior and best-known Republican in the country who at age 71 is mounting his third bid for the White House. Both his previous attempts, in 1980 and 1988, died in the snows of New Hampshire.

Sen. Dole was the clear leader in three polls released Sunday. None of his rivals were even close. Second place in all three polls went to Gulf war military leader Colin Powell, the former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, who is not a candidate and not even a registered Republican.

But one of the polls, in the Sunday New Hampshire

De Klerk: Post-

CAPE TOWN (AFP) — South Africa's democracy process will continue even if President Nelson Mandela is forced to leave the presidency, his predecessor, deputy President F.W. De Klerk said here Monday.

Unveiling his vision of post-Mandela South Africa, the leader of the conservative National Party (NP) said one of the questions he faced most frequently was: "What will happen if Nelson Mandela goes?"

"We all hope and pray" that it will not come to that for the 76-year-old president, Mr. De Klerk told journalists at the start of a week of briefings at the parliament here.

"But if it happens, the continuation will be assured," he said.

Mr. De Klerk said "there is considerable depth of leadership" in the government of national unity dominated by Mr. Mandela's African National Congress (ANC).

This means, he said, that the implementation of the government's key platform, the ambitious Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP), will be guaranteed no matter who leads the executive branch.

Mr. De Klerk reiterated that "there is no question of

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The report gave a wider dimension to a scandal that broke two years ago. Mr. Mitterrand's ex-cabinet chief Gilles Menage and the former head of the anti-terrorist unit, Christian Prouteau, were placed under formal judicial investigation last year on suspicion of ordering the wiretaps.

Opponents of Prime Minister Edouard Balladur's bid for the French presidency rushed to make political capital Monday out of charges of illegal wiretapping, forcing him on to the defensive. The conservative premier, for long the runaway favourite to become the next president, also saw his ratings slip in opinion polls.

Supporters of Mr. Balladur's right-wing rival, Paris Mayor Jacques Chirac, seized on an admission by the prime minister that his office authorised police to tape telephone conversations by a Paris politician. The politician, Jean-Pierre Maréchal, has said he was the victim of extortion in a plot to derail a probe into the finances of Mr. Balladur's Rally For the Republic (RPR) party.

Chirac's backer Jean-Louis Debré, the RPR's general secretary, denounced what he branded "a monarchial drift which is an attack on individual freedom."



French Prime Minister and conservative presidential candidate Edouard Balladur passes by a camera and prompter at his arrival on France 2 TV set for an interview. Mr. Balladur, for months coasting to an apparently

effortless victory in upcoming presidential elections, has suddenly found his lead shortening, just as the race moves properly into gear (AFP photo)

"We've had enough of regimes which listen in," Mr. Debré told France-Inter Radio. "It saddens me to see people still using methods which are against the republic, democracy and equality."

National Assembly Speaker Philippe Seguin, a Balladur foe within the RPR, said he would ask for a parliamentary inquiry if there was no convincing official explanation.

Right-wing anti-Maastricht campaigner Philippe De Villiers branded the bugging "profoundly immoral."

The patrician-like Balladur countered that it was not surprising a prime minister should be the focus of criticism in the run-up to the April-May presidential election. He appealed for an end to "poisonous" accusations.

"Everything was perfectly regular and legal. I challenge anyone to prove the opposite," he told a television interviewer, adding that his office had given the green light for the tapping under emergency regulations because the cause was urgent.

The bugging, without judicial permission, has been declared illegal by a court. "It was a Balladur manifesto on the defensive who went on television to plead both that (the wiretap) had been an urgent matter and normal practice," the leftist daily Liberation said.

Le Parisien echoed: "The bugging has trapped Balladur."

The accusations put to severe test Mr. Balladur's strategy of projecting himself as aloof from the political fray. The silver-haired premier has insisted he is too busy governing to stoop to politicking.

In the latest sign of Mr. Balladur's slipping popularity after student unrest, a weekend IFOP opinion poll showed the number of voters satisfied with his policies had fallen from 55 per cent to 46 per cent over the past month.

All surveys, however, show he would win the May 7 presidential run-off, whether he faces Mr. Chirac or Socialist candidate Lionel Jospin.

The probe into alleged graft by the RPR-controlled Paris housing authorities forced the resignation of Cabinet Minister Michel Roussin last year. It is closing in on aides of Interior Minister Charles Pasqua, a powerful Balladur backer, and Mr. Chirac.

A beautiful young woman, played by Marie Gillian, is bait to set up rich older men who are robbed and killed so her boyfriend (Olivier Sitruk) and his friend (Bruno Patzku) can have money to open clothing stores in the United States.

Special Mention — a second prize for best film — went to Smoke, by Hong Kong-born director Wayne Wang, whose Joy Luck Club was a big American hit in 1993. The story of a Brooklyn tobacco-store owner, played by Harvey Keitel, Smoke was a favourite of critics during the 12-day Berlinale, as the festival is nicknamed.

Keitel's acting was cited by the 10-member jury as "especially outstanding," putting him in second place behind Paul Newman, who now has a Berlinale Silver Bear behind him as he contends for the Best-Actor Oscar.

Josephine Siao won the Best Actress Silver Bear for her portrayal of the daughter-in-law of a Hong Kong man afflicted by Alzheimer's disease in the movie "Xiatian de Xue" or Summer Snow, by director Ann Hui.

Siao is losing her hearing, and Summer Snow may be the last movie for the leading Hong Kong actress.

Before Sunrise, which won Linklater the director's prize,

Large-scale violations of no-fly zone reported over Bosnia

SARAJEVO (AFP) — The U.N. Protection Force (UNPROFOR) said Monday it would increase monitoring of local airspace in a bid to deter violations of the no-fly zone over Bosnia by dozens of unidentified aircraft, notably helicopters.

The aircraft are flying covert missions, especially at night, to reinforce and resupply military positions, according to informed sources here.

New listening and observation posts will be set up, using both human and electronic detection methods, in the Tuzla area of northeast Bosnia in the wake of the latest violations, UNPROFOR spokesman Major Herve Gourmeillon said.

U.N. soldiers in the area would not be issued with night-vision goggles.

"We shall try, if not to prevent, to detect more precisely further flights," in the Tuzla area, he said.

Overnight Friday, seven-teen helicopter sorties were detected over the

government-held Tuzla area, along with a flight by a fixed-wing aircraft, Maj. Gourmeillon said.

Helicopters were detected flying in groups of two and three, but at one stage up to five flew in formation, he said.

And on Sunday, a helicopter identified as an M18 was detected in the same area.

Violations of the no-fly zone imposed by the U.N. Security Council in October 1992 are not new, as all parties to the war have made regular use of aircraft, especially helicopters, to reinforce and resupply.

"There is a pattern of very regular violation of air space over Bosnia, especially by helicopter," said UNPROFOR spokesman Alexander Ivankov.

Some 5,000 violations of Bosnian airspace had been reported since the no-fly ban was imposed, he said.

Franco Veltri, a North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) spokesman in Naples, for his part put the

number of violations registered both by the Atlantic alliance and UNPROFOR at 3,700 violations over the same period.

Most were by helicopters, many painted white and bearing a Red Cross, which made it difficult for action to be taken against them, he said. But there was "no air activity in direct support of military action," he added.

The only time NATO intervened to enforce the no-fly zone was in February last year when two U.S. F-16 fighters over the central Bosnian town of Novi Travnik as they sought to attack a government munitions factory.

UNPROFOR monitors Bosnian airspace from the ground, while NATO aircraft, including AWACS radar planes, constantly keep watch from the sky.

Serb radio in Pale, quoting a commander in the eastern sector, Monday denied that the most recent flights were by Serb aircraft.

The commander warned

that Serb forces would strike at Tuzla Airport should fighting resume to stop Muslim forces from receiving supplies there.

Meanwhile, Britain Monday downplayed the significance of Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic's rejection of the latest proposals by the Contact Group on Bosnia, saying the proposals were "still totally valid."

Mr. Milosevic was simply "putting his view on the table" and it did not come as "a surprise," a Foreign Office spokesman said.

Mr. Milosevic Sunday rejected a proposal that Serbia recognise Croatia and Bosnia in exchange for the lifting of most U.N. sanctions against the rump Yugoslavia.

Serbian recognition of Croatia and Bosnia would apparently force Belgrade to abandon any hopes of linking up with Serbs in those republics to form a "Greater Serbia."

The proposal was made, at the initiative of France, by the Contact Group.

Paul Newman wins award at Berlin Film Festival

BERLIN (AP) — Oscar nominee Paul Newman, playing a nearly over-the-hill construction worker in Robert Benton's Nobody's Fool, won the Best Actor Award Monday at the Berlin International Film Festival.

Another U.S. film industry victory was scored by Richard Linklater, who won the Silver Bear Best Director Award for Before Sunrise.

Other top prizes went to films from France, Russia, Hong Kong and China. The Golden Bear Award for best film went to L'Apprenti, or Live Bait, by French director Bertrand Tavernier. It is a murder story taken from real events that happened in Paris in 1984.

A beautiful young woman, played by Marie Gillian, is bait to set up rich older men who are robbed and killed so her boyfriend (Olivier Sitruk) and his friend (Bruno Patzku) can have money to open clothing stores in the United States.

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Siao is losing her hearing, and Summer Snow may be the last movie for the leading Hong Kong actress.

Before Sunrise, which won Linklater the director's prize,

is the love story of a young American (Ethan Hawke) and a French woman (Julie Delpy) who meet on the train from Budapest and spend a get-to-know-you day together in Vienna. Linklater, 33, first won recognition for the less conventional 1989 movie Slacker, a portrait of generation X young people adrift.

A Silver Bear for Best Theme and Style went to Russian director Vadim Abdrashitov's "Pjessa Diya Passazhiria," or The Play For A Passenger.

The Silver Bear for Best Visual Achievement was won by "Hongfeng," or Rouge, by Chinese director Li Shaohong.

The main competition of the 45th annual Berlinale had few of the contenders for this year's Hollywood Oscars. Nobody's Fool was the only competition film with Oscar-nominations — Newman for Best Actor and Robert Benton for Best Adapted Screenplay.

A few American movies shown outside the competition had multiple Oscar nominations and were enthusiastically received: Quiz Show directed by Robert Redford and The Shawshank Redemption directed by Frank Darabont.

This year's festival was a celebration of a century of movies, with offerings dating from the first short movies that were shown to paying audiences in Berlin and Paris in 1895.

Other prizes awarded at the end of the festival:

— Norway's "Ti Kniver I Hjertet," or Cross My Heart And Hope To Die, by director Manus Holst, won the Blue Angel Special Prize sponsored by Kodak and the European Academy of Film and Television.

Special Mention to "Colpo Di Luna," or Moon Shadow, by Italian director Alberto Simone.

Special Mention to "Sh'chur," by Israeli director Shmuel Hasfari.

U.S. seeks NATO support for Russia deal

BRUSSELS (R) — Washington sought support from its NATO allies Monday for an approach to Russia offering a broader relationship as a way of allaying Moscow's fear over plans to expand NATO membership up to its borders.

NATO sources said alliance ambassadors examined a letter from President Bill Clinton to Russian President Boris Yeltsin, sketching out the outlines of a new "enhanced dialogue."

The approach to Moscow represents a major policy switch by the alliance and, diplomats say, is a triumph for Russian diplomacy which appears to have had little problem containing the fallout from the crisis in Chechnya.

It was not immediately clear if the letter received the backing of the NATO allies, many of whom are wary of plans to try to extend the alliance eastwards to include at least some of Moscow's former partners in East and Central Europe.

NATO sources said the offer could result in a new treaty embracing all aspects of future Russia-West relations.

"It is clear the U.S. administration wants to put enlargement on the fast track and is seeking to buy off Russian opposition with an offer of some form of enhanced relationship," said one alliance diplomat.

Indians vote in key state poll seen favouring BJP

AHMEDABAD (R) — Indians voted Monday in the first round of key elections in the rapidly-industrialising western state of Gujarat amid reports of scattered violence and predictions of a pro-opposition swing.

A bomb went off in a village on the outskirts of the state's commercial capital of Ahmedabad Monday morning injuring four people but police said they were still checking whether it was poll-related violence.

Police used batons to disperse a group of about 400 workers from the rightwing opposition Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) who tried to take over a polling booth in an Ahmedabad school.

The elections in Gujarat, along with polls held earlier this month in Maharashtra state, are seen as crucial to the future of Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao's reformist government.

A poll by the fortnightly India Today magazine predicted a loss for the ruling Congress in Gujarat to the Hindu nationalist BJP. Forty-three per cent said they would vote for the BJP while 35 per cent favoured Congress.

Most voters said the BJP would fare better at removing corruption, improving law and order and tackling communalism.

Overall voting was light to moderate.

Election officials said up to 40 per cent of the eligible voters had cast their ballots by late afternoon in the first of two phases of voting. The second was scheduled for Saturday.

Witnesses said polling was heavy in Muslim-dominated areas of Ahmedabad, yet many Muslims appeared confused about who they would

Mr. Yeltsin was angered by a NATO decision last December to set up a study group to look into possible enlargement to include Moscow's former Warsaw Pact allies.

He warned the West such a move would create a new divide and replace the cold war with a "cold peace."

Since then, several attempts to reassure Moscow NATO enlargement would not pose a security threat have failed, forcing Western planners to focus on how to take in new members without alienating Russia.

On Monday, NATO Secretary General Willy Claes said it was time to define the parameters of a sustainable relationship with Moscow, but said the alliance recognised its obligation to anchor former East Bloc countries into the democratic family.

"We must acknowledge Russia's weight in European security and its legitimate security interests," he wrote in an article in Britain's Financial Times.

"We need a cooperative relationship with Russia pursuing democratisation and economic reform, and respecting human rights: An open relationship that can withstand occasional differences," he added.

A year ago NATO ruled out any special deal for Russia beyond Partnership for Peace.

The state Congress has fielded just 10 Muslim candidates in the 182-seat contest to the assembly while the BJP has a sole Muslim nominee.

"Partly the problem is that there is nobody to vote for. We do not want either the BJP or the Congress to benefit," Hassan Khan, a businessman who has been a staunch Congress supporter in the past, told Reuters.

In Hindu districts the polling was lighter because it was an auspicious day for weddings under the Hindu calendar and many families were preoccupied with festivities.

Some 400 weddings had been scheduled across the city Monday. "Even the smallest of wedding halls is booked today and I don't expect people to come to voting until the afternoon," said Lallo Shah, a party worker with the rightwing Hindu Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

More than 150,000 police and para-military units were on patrol across the state, and police said 16,236 people with criminal records had been taken into preventive custody ahead of the polls to prevent trouble. They were to be escorted to voting stations by policemen.

Gujarat is the latest in a string of state elections that began last November which could reshape the political map of India.

Results of voting in the four crucial states of Maharashtra, Gujarat, Bihar and Orissa will only be known in mid-March. Counting has been delayed until March 11, so that results from one state do not influence polling in another. Two other northeast states — Manipur and Arunachal Pradesh — are also holding state elections.

U.S. Republican presidential hopefuls make debut

MANCHESTER, New Hampshire (R) — Nine Republican presidential aspirants kicked off the 1996 U.S. presidential campaign Sunday with a frenetic day of political activity in New Hampshire, the state which can make or break presidential dreams.

The nine responded to an invitation from the New Hampshire Republican Party to address some 1,400 activists Sunday evening for six minutes each.

Leading the field was Senate majority leader Bob Dole, the most senior and best-known Republican in the country who at age 71 is mounting his third bid for the White House. Both his previous attempts, in 1980 and 1988, died in the snows of New Hampshire.

Sen. Dole was the clear leader in three polls released Sunday. None of his rivals were even close. Second place in all three polls went to Gulf war military leader Colin Powell, the former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, who is not a candidate and not even a registered Republican.

But one of the polls, in the Sunday New Hampshire

News, found 39 per cent of likely Republican voters undecided.

Though New Hampshire is one of the smallest U.S. states, with barely a million people, the northeastern state has long had a disproportionately large role in the U.S. presidential race.

Its primary election — in which the party faithful express their preference for candidate — next February will be the first real test of candidates' strength among voters.

Since 1948, with one exception in 1964, the winner of the Republican primary here has gone on to win the party's presidential nomination. President Bill Clinton, as the White House incumbent, has a strong advantage in the race for the Democratic nomination but he is not assured of being his party's choice.

If elected, Sen. Dole would be the oldest president ever to take office. But he sought to meet the age issue head on as he launched a three-day whirlwind visit, telling supporters in North Conway he would put 92-year-old South Carolina Senator Strom

Thurmond on the ticket if people felt he was too young. Sen. Dole's main opponent at this early stage is Texas Senator Phil Gramm, who will become the first man to formally announce his candidacy, after a fund-raising rally in Dallas Friday at which he hopes to collect over \$3 million.

Relations between Sen. Dole and Sen. Gramm, both tough political street fighters, have the potential to become nasty as the race develops. Sen. Gramm has attacked Sen. Dole, for in his words, not being a true conservative. Sen. Dole responded he was a conservative when Sen. Gramm was still in high school.

Sen. Dole was the only one of the nine prospective candidates not to participate in a TV forum a few hours before the convention. The debate was marked by fire-ups over abortion and the relations between the federal government and the states.

While Sen. Dole has the highest name recognition and Sen. Gramm the most money, former Tennessee Governor Lamar Alexander has surprised many by build-

ing an impressive state organisation, possibly the best of anyone at this stage, according to New Hampshire Republican Governor Steve Merrill.

Mr. Alexander, a former education secretary, said on ABC Television he wanted to shift power and resources from the federal government to states and localities.

"I think the American people have had it about right up to here with Washington, D.C., and even with a Republican Congress," he said, referring to the Republican takeover of Congress last November.

Sen. Gramm, appearing on CBS Television, said his first priority as president would be balancing the budget in his first four years. "I will not run for re-election unless I get the job done," he pledged.

Others speaking at the event in Manchester are Senator Arlen Specter of Pennsylvania, Senator Richard Lugar of Indiana, columnist Pat Buchanan and Alan Keyes, California Representative Robert Dornan and former Labour Secretary Lynn Martin.

De Klerk: Post-Mandela S. Africa will continue on democracy path

CAPE TOWN (AFP) — South Africa's democracy process will continue even if President Nelson Mandela is forced to leave the presidency, his predecessor, deputy President F.W. de Klerk said here Monday.

Unveiling his vision of post-Mandela South Africa, the leader of the conservative National Party (NP) said one of the questions he faced most frequently was: "What will happen if Nelson Mandela goes?"

"We all hope and pray" that it will not come to that for the 76-year-old president, Mr. De Klerk told journalists at the start of a week of briefings at the parliament here.

"But if it happens, the continuation will be assured," he said.

Mr. De Klerk said "there is considerable depth of leadership" in the government of national unity dominated by Mr. Mandela's African National Congress (ANC).

This means, he said, that the implementation of the government's key platform, the ambitious Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP), will be guaranteed no matter who leads the executive branch.

Mr. De Klerk reiterated that "there is no question of

the NP leaving the government," as rumoured after a major crisis during the New Year period sparked by the indemnity from prosecution for the NP government had offered in its final days to policemen accused of apartheid-era crimes.

"We will continue (to take part in the government) with dedication, in a constructive spirit," he said.

Mr. De Klerk noted that the three parties that make up the government — the ANC, the NP and Home Affairs Minister Mangosuthu Buthelezi's Inkatha Freedom Party — "represent 92 per cent of the electorate."

As a result, he said, "sometimes we are competitors... so we will criticise where criticism is due, and propose solutions."

He said the government functions "reasonably well," and described his personal relationship with Mr. Mandela as "correct, frank and cordial."

The cabinet, he said, works "very well" in implementing economic and fiscal policy and he was full of praise for the RDP.

The plan, Mr. De Klerk said, now belongs to the government as a whole and not to any of its components.

"It has the capacity... year

to year, to yield results," he said.

Mr. De Klerk was asked how he could reconcile issues such as the death penalty, on which the NP and the ANC are at odds, with Mr. Mandela's statement Friday that the government has "collective responsibility" in defining and implementing policy.

"In a coalition," he said, "there must be room for parties to differ publicly (on some issues) without this creating a crisis resulting in the government breaking up."

Although the policy of the current government is to rule by consensus, Mr. De Klerk said, "you cannot have a consensus on the death penalty: You are either for or against."

He suggested that political parties give their members the freedom to vote as they see fit personally when the issue, now under discussion by the Constitutional Court in Johannesburg, comes before parliament.

He said NP members would be left to vote as they like on the death penalty, "because it is a matter of conscience."

Mr. De Klerk said Monday: "The crime was wrong and

former white government was wrong and should never have happened."

The former president was responding to allegations in a London newspaper by former South African agent Craig Williamson that he was part of a seven-man team that bombed the ANC's London office in March 1982 after assembling the device in the South African embassy.

Mr. Williamson also told of his role in the parcel-bomb killings of activists Ruth First and Jeanette Schoon and her six-year-old daughter.

First, the wife of Communist leader Joe Slovo who died of cancer in January, was killed in Maputo and Ms. Schoon in Angola by bombs Mr. Williamson claimed were assembled by police in Pretoria.

Mr. De Klerk, who was president from 1989 to last April's first all-race election and a cabinet minister before then, was a member of a State Security and Intelligence Panel during the years of apartheid rule when government agencies were involved in the elimination of political opponents.

But he said Monday that he had no part in any attacks against anti-apartheid leaders and organisations.

"The crime was wrong and

Resilience shines through the rubble of Kobe

A month after the earthquake, people are still dying of related ailments writes

WHAT HAPPENS after a 20-second calamity brings death, injury, destruction and prolonged suffering to a proud and prosperous Japanese city?

The Old Testament would decree much grief and lamentation among survivors. Karl Marx would doubtless prophesy despair turning to "situation and revolt. A month to the morning after the Great Hanshin Earthquake struck Kobe, one can instead only marvel at the extraordinary resilience of its social fabric with so much else crushed, rent apart, cindered.

In Kobe and the surrounding region, 5,372 people were killed by the quake, 26,815 were injured, and 215,000 are still living in shelters, many hoping their numbers will be picked on the next "lottery" for temporary housing.

Aged refugees are increasingly falling victim to stress, malnourishment and discomfort. Fifty people have died recently from "quake-related ailments". Most households remain without a gas supply, and large tracts of Kobe have no water other than that delivered by army or municipal lorries.

Once demolition is completed and the city is rebuilt — on a timetable and budget that no one can yet foresee — deep psychological scars must still be healed. Nevertheless, social workers have been greatly impressed by how the people of Kobe have handled this crisis.

The earthquake has been a great social leveller in a city best known for its old money, high society, cosmopolitanism and fashion consciousness. Where shops and restaurants are open, they display special

cheap prices, or signs saying "We Love Kobe".

In the exclusive hilly district of Kitano ward, where there are many old foreign houses, boutiques and luxury apartment blocks, there are resplendent murals about the sudden exodus of wealthy Indian traders.

At the 125-year old Kobe Club, known to Japanese in the city as the "Gaijin" (foreigners) Club, the management has wisely decided to take in refugees and offer cut-price meals to non-members. How genuine and lasting is the expression of pious compassion for the quake victims and underprivileged of Kobe it is difficult to know, but the spirit of solidarity and community care is at least chastening to a visitor from Tokyo.

The dignity of Kobe citizens is uplifting to observe. Take the Japan Railway train on a short stretch of reopened line that runs through the working-class Nagata ward and all you see on either side is what appears to be an archive photograph of the fire-bombing of Japanese cities in 1945, a blasted vista of scorched earth, blackened buildings, twisted machinery from the shoe factories, wrecked cars.

Near Takatori Station, in the middle of this devastation, a couple dig with a shovel in a section of rubble marked off by white string. Yoshihiro Honda explains that the string marks the land of his former house which he has just registered with the ward office, all land registration documents having been destroyed. His house survived the quake only to be engulfed by fire.

"The whole morning we didn't see a fire engine, and when they arrived, they had no water,"



A Nishinomiyama hillside covered with toppled gravestones, one result of last month's Japanese earthquake

when they arrived, they had no water."

Now they want "to borrow as much money as possible" to rebuild on the same plot, sharing the house with their married son. "It will be in his name. I'm too old," Mr. Honda says.

His job is at the damaged shipbuilding works of Kawasaki Heavy Industries, which employs about 1,200 — no one has been laid-off or sacked. It has given him and his wife a temporary place to stay. "I

feel lucky to have a place to live in a company dormitory," he says. "Some people are still in tents."

In front of a gutted building that once housed several small shoe factories, Harukumi Kimoto and some of his employees are piling up felt shoe templates and fluorescent light fittings from what is left of his workshop, while grilling sweet potatoes on an open brazier. Behind them, the way is blocked by a collapsed building. A smell of burning rubber assails the

nostrils. A bizarre street party is in session. "Take me to England, I'll wash your clothes," one of the women cackles.

Mr. Kimoto cheerfully explains that he intends to reopen his factory and give work to his staff, though he "can't afford to think right now" where the money will come from.

Yasunobu Kawase, hobbling with a stick from quake injuries, peddles "shoe accessories" from a makeshift shop in a car park. The front and back

walls of the building where he and his wife lived on the third floor fell away in the quake, and the structure looks like a doll's house.

"See that bed up there, that's where my wife was sleeping," he points. Now he lives with his son, who rescued them.

One of the few thriving neighbourhood businesses is the undertakers, its fleet of black limousines unscathed and drivers at the ready for the next funeral. Around the corner a man is climbing down a ladder

from his bedroom, carrying a few possessions. The ground floor had collapsed, crushing the white Toyota in his garage.

From another alley blocked with rubble, an elderly man emerges with a television set from his flattened home. "It can be repaired," he says. Life is not so bad in the primary school where he spends the nights. "Now we have showers, and I'm lucky — no children."

In the nearby New Bank cafe, chunks of broken concrete dangle from wires. There is no running water or electricity, but the neighbourhood wives are in fine spirits, eating dainty biscuits and sipping coffee brewed on a camping stove. Ali is cooing until a large lorry rumbles past, laden with rubble. The buildings shakes, and one woman lets out a scream. "I thought it was another quake," she explains with embarrassment.

The Independent

Controversy seems to be settled

(Continued from page 1)

sparked by their visit.

"Our stand was and still is very clear," Dr. Zayadin said. "We have never uttered a word against Jordan and the Syrians were also careful not to."

Syrian Vice President Abdul Halim Khaddam told the Jordanian team that President Hafez Al Assad did not meet with the Jordanian opposition parties because "he was careful not to do anything that might influence Jordanian-Syrian relations," according to Dr. Zayadin.

But Mr. Khaddam said Syria had tried several times to unify its stand with Jordan but failed. According to Mr. Zibri, Mr. Khaddam contended that Jordan did not respect its agreements with Syria and acted unilaterally in making peace with Israel.

In a meeting last week with representatives of the foreign press, His Majesty King Hussein had said the political parties' visit to

Syria will be looked into. Islamic Deputy Abdullah Akaileh said a heated discussion took place during the Sunday meeting but party leaders agreed that there should not be any infringement on the law or on Jordan.

Dr. Akaileh, a member of the executive bureau of the Islamic Action Front party, which declined the Syrian invitation, said the agenda also included important issues such as the election law, the revision of governorates, the introduction of new measures to

facilitate procedures during elections, the political parties' budgets and the dissolution of some parties that have less than 50 members.

Mr. Hammad called on political party leaders to present their parties' budgets to the ministry as stipulated by the law. He set March 15 as their deadline.

Governorates will be re-defined and divided into districts to implement the decentralisation policy, the minister said. Also, registration procedures will be facilitated and the ballot committee and the vote-

counting committee will be unified in one.

The minister also proposed that the registration for voting be extended from 45 days to five or six months and that voters have special cards that carry their national number.

"We didn't give our response to the minister's proposals," Mr. Zibri said. "We didn't even discuss the law in substance or the number of constituencies and the number of deputies per districts. There has been no mention of changing voters' age from 19 to 18 which is against the Constitution itself."

One of thousands of foreigners from Eastern Europe and Asia brought to Israel to replace Palestinians as the Jewish state's cheap labour force, Mr. Plesha has not received a salary in more than two months.

"I came here to work hard, to make money and to go home. I don't want pity. I just want what I earned. Without the money, I can't go home," he said.

His employer hired 300 foreigners to build 74 apartments in under a year in an affluent Tel Aviv suburb. The construction company went bankrupt and the workers, living in crowded, leaky bungalows near the building site, were left holding worthless work contracts.

"We've seen this over and over," said Hana Zohar, director of a workers' rights group in Israel. "Employers don't pay the foreign workers for a month or two. They say they have no money. Then they tell authorities the workers are no longer in their employment and they get deported," she said.

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Romanians, Thais, Israel's new cheap labour force

By Danny Gur-Arieh Reuter

TEL AVIV — Doru Plesha poured concrete at an Israeli construction site for eight months, sending the money he made to his family in Romania.

Now, he's stuck. One of thousands of foreigners from Eastern Europe and Asia brought to Israel to replace Palestinians as the Jewish state's cheap labour force, Mr. Plesha has not received a salary in more than two months.

"I came here to work hard, to make money and to go home. I don't want pity. I just want what I earned. Without the money, I can't go home," he said.

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'Israelis do not own land'

(Continued from page 1)

three laws will open the door wide for Zionist invasion, colonisation and economic domination," the statement contended. The cancellation of the laws "will also allow (Israel) to control and dominate all our abilities and resources and our security because (Israel) possesses the financial, economic and technological advances that are also supported by the U.S."

"It will also allow Israel to build colonies all over Jordan through buying real estate, land and factories, companies, hotels etc," added the statement.

It said the high density of population in Israel and the continuing migration of Jews to that country would result in Jewish migration to Jordan in the absence of the law that prohibits the sale of land and dealings

with Israel. The statement referred to what it said were the words of Israeli Likud leader Benjamin Netanyahu to the Knesset (Israeli parliament) in the presence of U.S. President Bill Clinton in October. It quoted Mr. Netanyahu as saying that "we will go through Jordan across the bridges of peace but our eyes on Moab and Jordan" (the Madaba region).

Another point cited by the opposition in its push against the proposed repeal of the laws is that "it will contradict the Arab League's decision which obligate (the League's) members to boycott Israel and the companies that deal with Israel."

"It will also mean inviting our people to deal with Israel and allowing the sale of real estate to Israel at a

time when (the Jewish state) is occupying Palestinian, Syrian and South Lebanese territory, is continuing the Judaisation of Jerusalem, building settlements, detaining thousands of Palestinians and Arabs in its jail and ignoring the legitimate rights of the Palestinians," the statement said.

"Can we in Jordan turn the enemy into a friend and deal with it as we deal with a Jordanian or Arab citizen, and open the door for it to invade us from the inside and also own our land, our trade, information, security and industry?" the statement asked.

"We appeal to you, our brothers in Parliament, to reject the draft motion completely so that your council will not be held responsible for opening the

door for Zionists to buy our land and colonise us."

"In the interest of our public and Jordan's future — which is your responsibility as representatives of legislative power — do not be the builders of Zionist economic invasion or colonisation of Jordan," the statement went on to say.

"You know very well the danger of the Zionist movement and the teachings of the Talmud and Torah that form the Zionist ideology which they have implemented in Palestine. Do not allow them to implement a second Balfour declaration in Jordan."

The statement was signed by the Jordan Arab Baath Socialist Party; the Islamic Action Front; the National Action Front; the Jordan Democratic Social-

ist Party; the People's Democratic Party; the Jordan Communist Party; the Jordan Democratic Party; the Jordan People's Unity Party; the Party for Progress and Democracy in Jordan; the Arab Baathist Progressive Party; the Jordanian and Arab Constitutional Front Party.

Mohammad Dweib, an independent member of Parliament and former minister, rejected the call and said there should not be any question over Jordan fulfilling its obligations under the treaty.

"The repeal of the laws is a part of the peace treaty, and I don't see why there should be any question over Jordan meeting its commitments under the treaty," Mr. Dweib told the Jordan Times.

PLO leadership meets today

(Continued from page 1)

ments there and we take it from there," Mr. Dromi told AP.

Yedioth Ahronoth said Monday that under the Israeli proposal, the troops stationed in towns taken over by the PLO would remain in their bases.

An Israeli official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the security arrangements still needed to be negotiated. But he said the Israelis had promised the Palestinians that the army would retain a "low profile."

This could mean the soldiers stayed in their bases or around the perimeter of the city, said the official.

"I believe that after some haggling we will reach an agreement," he said.

Israel on Monday further eased a closure on the West Bank and Gaza Strip, letting in about 2,000 Palestinian workers from the West Bank and 1,000 from Gaza. Israel began on Sunday lifting the closure imposed last month after suicide bombers killed 21 Israelis in Israel.

Mr. Surani said in Cairo the committee would rethink the whole of the peace process and draw up a new programme for peace.

Mr. Arafat was due to arrive in Cairo on Tuesday via Tunis from Paris.

When asked late Sunday by French television France 2, if he was considering calling off the peace talks, Mr. Arafat said: "No, No."

The Israeli foreign ministry also denied there was any "special crisis" in the talks.

"We know there is some amount of opposition among the Palestinians, not necessarily to the whole process but to the way it is being handled now," a spokesman said.

Israeli Environment Minister Yossi Sarid told AFP, "Negotiations with the Palestinians really are on the right track."

"Things are going to get better day by day," predicted Mr. Sarid, who met Mr. Arafat in Paris at the weekend.

"This government will imple-

ment the declaration of principles from A to Z."

A new round of Israeli-PLO talks on holding Palestinian elections to a self-rule council is also to be held on Tuesday in Cairo.

An Israeli foreign ministry spokesman said election campaigning was also on the agenda.

The two sides had agreed to meet for two rounds of talks each month, he added.

"Everything is deadlocked. We are no longer talking about the Israeli-Palestinian peace accord, nor the redeployment of the Israeli army, nor the settlements," Mr. Surani charged.

"The only subject on the current agenda of the negotiations is Israel's security."

According to the PLO

office in Cairo, at least 10 out of the 18 committee members are expected to attend Tuesday's meeting, which needs nine members to attend for a quorum.

Mr. Arafat would "probably be accompanied" by both Mahmoud Abbas and Farouk Kaddoumi, who boycotted the last meeting held in November in Gaza.

Mr. Arafat chairs the committee, which is the highest executive body for all Palestinians both in the territories and in exile and groups all Palestinian factions except the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) and the Islamic Jihad.

Two of the committee members have resigned and four have suspended their participation in protest at the

autonomy accords.

Independent member Abdullah Huri also poured scorn on the idea. "It's two years since Arafat has had any contact, even by telephone, with several of the committee members," he said.

Another independent member in Amman, Elia Khouri, said he would take part because it was a "national and pan-Arab duty... at such a crucial juncture."

In Paris, Mr. Arafat said the peace process had reached an impasse and called for outside help to move it forward.

The Palestinian leader said the PLO was still committed to the current negotiations.

"In one case a company owed a Romanian worker \$1,400 but didn't want to

pay. They had security people dressed in blue — to the workers they looked like policemen — actually put him on the plane before we and others intervened," Mr. Zohar said.

Israeli employers entice the workers in their home countries with promises to fly them to Israel, house them, provide them with medical insurance and pay monthly salaries of up to \$600.

But pay slips show the employers deduct insurance payments and the cost of the airfare in monthly instalments. The foreigners, working 50 to 60 hours a week, end up with half the salary they were promised.

Mr. Plesha says his employer also deducted a "security deposit" every month to ensure he does not leave for work elsewhere. All together, he says, his employer owes him \$2,700.

"They'll get some of that money, maybe a few hundred dollars, but it will take time," said attorney Shaul Bergeron who has taken over receivership of the construction company.

Romanian embassy officials in Israel have complained about treatment of foreign workers and authorities have begun cracking down on employers, handing out \$850 fines for each violation of labour laws.

But Oren Karni, head of the government department charged with enforcing labour laws, said the fines do not always deter.

"We're talking about large profits for employers and middlemen. Sometimes they factor in the cost of an occasional fine and still come out ahead. If we could impose a prison sentence on these people, even a short one, the violations would cease," he said.

Mr. Rabin's government announced recently it would allow another 5,000 foreigners to work in Israel. Housing Minister Binyamin Ben-Eliezer is considering asking the cabinet to approve 20,000 additional positions.

"It's getting to the point where even if the closure is lifted, Palestinians may not find work," said Mr. Zohar.

EU ministers agree to continue EMU preparations

BRUSSELS (R) — European Union (EU) finance ministers agreed Monday that technical preparations for the single currency could continue, although some warned of the danger of leaving politics and economics out of the equation.

"I continue to believe that it will not be a practical proposition for any member state to enter into the third stage of economic and monetary before 1999 at the earliest..."

But that said I agree that the technical preparations should go ahead," British Chancellor of the Exchequer Kenneth Clarke told his colleagues during the opening session of the meeting.

European Commission President Jacques Santer said the commission intended to release by June a convergence paper on the progress of the single currency.

Santer said the commission would prepare the transition to the single currency, he said, under the Maastricht Treaty all the technical preparations have to be in place by the end of 1996 in order to regulate the majority of member states are ready to merge their currencies in 1999.

The ministers broadly welcomed the green paper, though Luxembourg, Britain and Germany all stressed that the key was getting the

bloc's economies — and particularly national finances and unemployment — back under control.

"We need to take a careful look at all the technical and political problems so we don't simply treat this as a technical matter," Luxembourg Prime Minister Jean Claude Juncker said.

Mr. Santer also told the ministers that the commission intended to try to clear up a raft of indirect tax matters left over from last year, including deciding whether to levy value added tax at origin or destination, excise duties on alcohol and fuel and a voluntary framework for a carbon dioxide tax.

He added that the commission would emphasize the need to combat fraud against the bloc's 81-billion-Euro annual budget — a declaration that was applauded by all the ministers.

Anti-Fraud Commissioner Anita Gradin gave the meeting a run down of the commission's detailed fraud-fighting plans.

The ministers also discussed national plans to stop the steady bleeding from the budget.

The ministers also laid the groundwork for a meeting next month with their counterparts from Poland, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic and Slovakia, before adjourning for lunch.

Iraq oil project costs to exceed \$10 billion — MEES

NICOSIA (R) — The development and repair of Iraqi oil installations, for which Baghdad is seeking the help of foreign companies, could exceed \$10 billion, the Middle East Economic Survey (MEES) reported Monday.

The newsletter said foreign mainly European companies that had been negotiating for the development of new oil fields had recently sent technical teams to Iraq at the government's invitation to assess the extent of Gulf war damage.

The idea is to move quickly once U.N. sanctions imposed for Iraq's 1990 invasion of Kuwait are removed. The U.N. Security Council is due to review the sanctions in mid-March but no decision is expected then.

The general consensus appears to be that, when sanctions are removed, Iraq could reasonably quickly raise production to around two million b/d (barrels per day), with exports in the region of 1.5 million b/d, it said. Current production is estimated by Reuters at about 550,000 b/d.

"However, it is reckoned that it would take Iraq at least three years to restore production capacity to its pre-August 1990 level of some 3.5 million b/d," MEES said.

It said fields have suffered through lack of maintenance and pumping installations and storage facilities both at the fields and along the export pipelines were severely damaged.

"The rehabilitation of existing oil production and export capacity — to be paid for, of course, through oil deliveries — will have to be Iraq's number one priority in the post-sanctions era," it said.

MEES said negotiations have been held with a score of companies, the most advanced being with France's Societe Nationale Elf-Aquitaine and Total S.A. for the Majnoon and Nahr Umar fields, Russia's Lukoil for the West Qurna field and Italy's AGIP for the Nasiriyah field.

It said it understood the total cost of developing these four new giant fields and the rehabilitation of the destroyed facilities in southern Iraq was around \$10 billion.

Facilities were also damaged in northern Iraq, particularly a pump station north of Kirkuk which serviced the Iraqi-Turkey export pipeline. This was largely responsible for reducing the pipeline's capacity to one million b/d from 1.6 million.

Official Iraqi media reported on Feb. 13 that President Saddam Hussein chaired a cabinet session which made a preliminary review of applications by some Western companies seeking long-term oil exploration and production contracts.

And deals, when signed, may not be implemented until after the sanctions are lifted. Due to resistance by the United States, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, there is no certainty of when this will be.

Low oil prices may block Gulf capacity expansion

ABU DHABI (AFP) — Low crude prices caused by over-supply and proposals from industrial countries for new energy taxes have revived fears of a block to further Gulf capacity expansion projects.

The oil ministers of the six-nation Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), which controls 45 per cent of the world's crude reserves and one fifth of the production, voiced their concern at a meeting in Riyadh.

They discussed the oil market situation and highlighted a surplus caused by excess output by producers outside the 12-nation Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), according to GCC assistant secretary general for economic affairs, Abdullah Al Quwaiz.

"During the meeting, there was a feeling that the current situation, in which there is excess supply and a proposal for increasing energy taxes, does not encourage investment in projects to raise capacity," Mr. Quwaiz said after Saturday's meeting.

Most Gulf states have launched projects to boost their crude production capacity to face world demand, which is projected to grow by nearly 10 million barrels per day (b/d) by 2000.

Optimistic forecasts have projected demand to surge to 92 million b/d by 2020 from 56 million b/d in 1990.

Saudi Arabia, the world's top oil exporter and producer, will reach around 10 million b/d this year from 9.6 million b/d in 1993. Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) will also exceed 2.5 million b/d each.

The projects have cost billions of dollars while more funds are needed to carry out further expansions until 2000. Independent estimates have put total costs of oil expansion projects in the GCC since 1990 at \$70 billion.

According to the Organisation of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries (OAPEC), initial expansion plans by Saudi Arabia will increase its capacity to 12 million in 2000 while it will rise to 3.5 million b/d in Kuwait and 3.2 million b/d in the UAE.

The other members — Oman, Bahrain and Qatar — are relatively small producers with a combined output of 1.2 million b/d.

Experts said capacity expansions in the region were essential to stave off a future world supply crisis as the GCC plus Iran and Iraq own more than 60 per cent of the world's crude reserves of around one trillion barrels.

"More than 80 per cent of the increase in demand is supposed to be met by those GCC producers. Any delay in expansion projects could cause a supply disruption as production is receding in other countries," one expert said.

Financial hardships caused by oil prices have forced some Gulf states to consider readmitting foreign oil partners they kicked out a few decades ago to secure funds and technology for capacity expansion projects.

The UAE is the only exception in the region as it has retained those partners and its expansion projects are running smoothly.

Prices have remained nearly \$4 below OPEC's minimum target of \$21 because of overproduction by some OPEC members and other oil exporters, especially North Sea producers Britain and Norway. There are also plans by Norway to boost output, a move that has already caused concern in the Gulf.

"The decision by some producers outside OPEC, mainly Norway, to increase oil output is catastrophic," Qatari Oil Minister Abdullah Al Atteyya told reporters.

Italian budget ready, needed to calm market fears

MILAN (R) — Prime Minister Lamberto Dini's non-partisan government has promised to unveil its key mini-budget later this week, a package seen as vital to restoring confidence in Italy's beleaguered markets.

Mr. Dini's office moved swiftly over the weekend to try to allay investor alarm after the lira's recent hemorrhage against the mighty German mark, saying the budget had been completed and the government was committed to reforming the state's finances.

The new measures are expected to bring in up to 20 trillion lire (\$12.5 billion) as the treasury struggles to meet its 1995 deficit targets, with the emphasis placed firmly on a series of potentially unpopular tax hikes.

Some parties in Italy's fractious parliament have already said they might oppose the budget, predicted to include higher levies on petrol, but Mr. Dini has warned of dire consequences if anyone tries to stop the bill.

"It would be criminal to block it. I don't say this for my sake or for the sake of my government, but for the Italian economy, the currency and the country," Mr. Dini said in an interview with La Repubblica newspaper Saturday.

"Anyone blocking it would assume a dramatic responsibility and I can't believe anyone would dare do it," he added.

Mr. Dini's rebuke came after former Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi was widely quoted as saying his centrist Freedom Alliance would only accept the budget if it received guarantees of early general elections in

June. But businessman-turned-politician Berlusconi Sunday denied he had ever made such a connection and bitterly rejected any charges that he was acting irresponsibly.

"We regard the mini-budget with a sense of responsibility. We want to see it and possibly make some improvements to it. We realise that the country must find a way out of its economic crisis," he told Italian state radio.

Last week the Bank of Italy was forced to intervene two days running in the currency market to try and restore calm as the lira tumbled on the exchanges, crashing to a record low of 1,086.75 against the German mark on Friday.

At the back of the market's problems is the country's huge 2,000 trillion lire (\$12.5 trillion) debt mountain — the largest public deficit in Europe.

Mr. Dini said in a statement Saturday the forthcoming budget would stabilise the ratio between the country's debt and its gross domestic product (GDP) — a year ahead of schedule.

Newspapers have forecast that the package would look to raise some 15 trillion lire (\$9.4 billion) from increases in direct and indirect taxation, while up to five trillion lire (\$3.1 billion) would come from spending cuts.

Former central banker Dini, who was treasury minister in Mr. Berlusconi's government which collapsed at the end of last year, also pledged to outline measures aimed at speeding through the country's privatisation programme.

Cyprus economy rises to meet EU challenge

NICOSIA (AFP) — The eastern Mediterranean island of Cyprus, bolstered by a prosperous economy, is rising to the challenge of its campaign to join the European Union (EU).

With a per capita gross national product (GNP) of \$12,000 — higher than Greece or Portugal, around the same level as Ireland — and unemployment of under two per cent, its application for membership was approved in 1993.

The application is no longer linked to reaching a settlement on the island, divided into Greek and Turkish Cypriot sectors since Turkish troops invaded the northern third of Cyprus in 1974.

Negotiations for Cyprus to join are expected to start after 1996, under a deal linked to an EU customs union with Turkey that has so far been vetoed by Greece which wants a firm date for accession talks.

The Greek-Cypriots, who number 635,000, have set up

an economy based on the service industry and centred on tourism, which brought in \$1.8 billion last year, or 21 per cent of GNP and 40 per cent of foreign currency earnings.

More than half of the 2.1 million visitors in 1994 were British, followed by Scandinavians, Germans and French tourists. The number of Russian tourists has tripled each year since 1992, with 77,000 visiting in 1994.

The second-largest foreign currency earner is offshore business, which last year raised \$300 million.

More than 17,000 foreign firms are registered, 1,100 of which have fully-fledged offices. The offshore companies employ more than 3,300 foreigners and 2,000 Cypriots.

In 1994, the shipping sector, with more than 2,000 vessels flying the green-yellow-and-white Cypriot flag, raked in another \$10 million.

"European, American and

Russian offshore companies are attracted by the low rate of taxation on profits — 4.25 per cent," said Takis Clerides of the international auditing firm KPMG. "And they can then repatriate their gains thanks to agreements on avoiding double taxation."

The banking sector also reflects the healthy state of the Cypriot economy.

The nine local banks currently hold a total of five billion pounds (\$10.5 billion) in deposits and the assets of the 34 offshore units amount to \$2.1 billion.

The Cyprus pound, which is protected, will however have to be liberalised in case of EU membership.

And foreign businessmen have warned that rises in the cost of living could cost Cyprus its competitive edge against other offshore bases such as Dubai in the United Arab Emirates.

Amid the upsurge, agriculture which once formed the backbone of the island's economy has taken a beating.

With \$100 million, it now accounts for only two per cent of the GNP.

Light industry is also lagging behind, weighed down by a pound which trades for more than \$2 and last year it brought in \$339 million or five per cent of GNP.

Joining the EU would deprive state coffers of customs revenues and the local market would be exposed to European competition and have to open its doors to more foreign workers.

"But Cyprus will receive compensation during the adjustment period," noted a European diplomat.

The government of President Glafkos Clerides has been trying to keep inflation at around four per cent and to limit budget deficit to less than three per cent of GNP, in keeping with terms of the Maastricht treaty.

It has also pledged to cut spending, notably with a freeze on public sector appointments.

Peanuts



Clapp



Monty'n'Jeff



Five-day week no longer a dream for Chinese

BEIJING (R) — A half-day cut in China's working week has raised productivity, retail sales and the quality of life and a five-day week is no longer a dream, the Economic Daily said Monday.

China cut four hours off the former 48-hour week in February 1994, with people working on alternate Saturdays instead of every week.

This change did not hurt the manufacturing sector, because industrial productivity rose to 60-80 per cent from 40-60 per cent, the newspaper said.

Retail sales boomed because people had more leisure, with sales on work-free Saturdays 30 to 50 per cent higher than on ordinary days, it said.

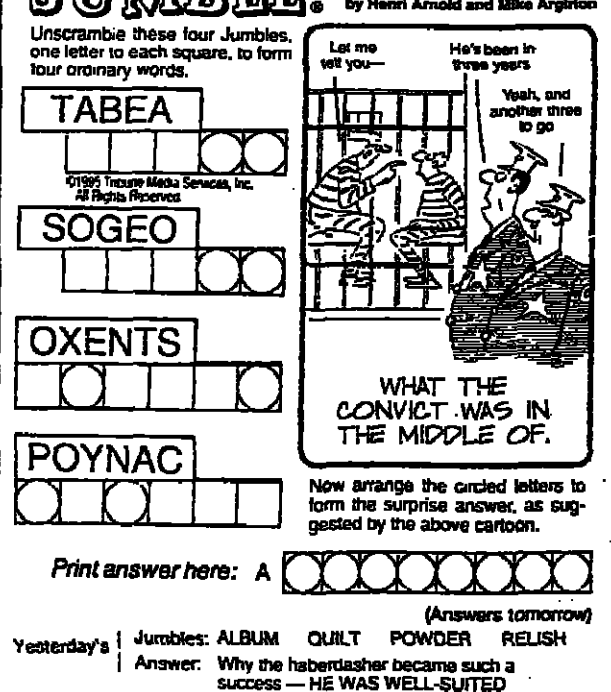
Retail sales in Peking in 1994 were 67.9 billion yuan (\$8.8 billion), an increase of 13 billion yuan (\$1.54 billion) over 1993, and nationwide spending by domestic tourists was 95 billion yuan (\$11.3 billion) up 10 per cent on 1993, it said.

The change also improved the quality of life, giving people more time for cultural and leisure activities and cutting the number of quarrels because people felt less under stress, it said.

THE BETTER HALF



JUMBLE



HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR TUESDAY FEBRUARY 21, 1995

By Thomas S. Pierson, Astrologer, Carroll Righter Foundation

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) This is a good day to discuss new ideas with business partners. Any delays should be accepted philosophically. Maintain a cheerful manner with all those who you are in contact with today.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) Plan your affairs on a more satisfying basis and have more security. A new contact whom you meet today could give you suggestions to achieve your objectives.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) Have talks with partners so you can take advantage of a new situation that has arisen today. Analyse your progress in the evening and stay on top of new things.

MOON CHILDREN: (June 22 to July 21) Stop putting off tasks at hand and gain more profits. Start those health treatments today and improve your outward appearance.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) Jump into regular routines without delay and get much accomplished whether of a business or personal nature to have your utmost success. Get out on the town tonight.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) Be willing to compromise at home for the sake of harmony. Study projects today that could give you added income so you can achieve what you want.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) Today you are able to get the support of associates for a new project you have in mind. Use extreme care in motion today and try to stay out of trouble.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) Analyse your financial status now and find better ways through abundance. Listen to what an expert has to suggest so that you can achieve much success.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) Go after your aims in a most positive way today and gain excellent results. Strive for increased happiness. Be poised and alert to conditions around you.

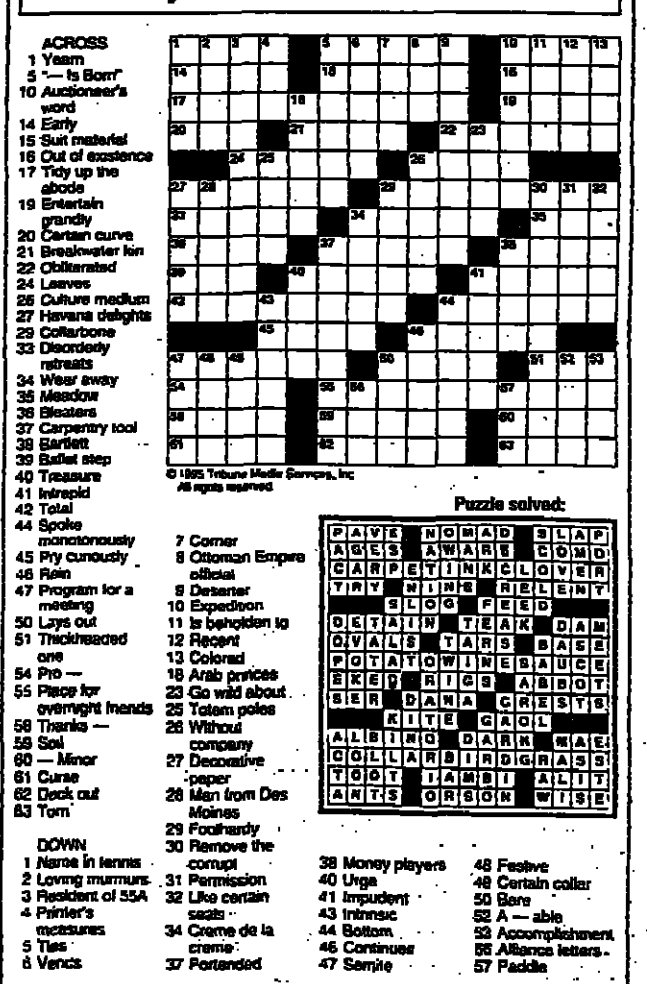
CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) Take steps to improve the quality of life today. Let your conversations with others be quiet and cultures so that you can have much happiness.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) Sociability is the keynote today and much can be accomplished. You are able to gain a personal aim at this time which will benefit you a great deal.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) A good day to gain the respect of higher ups who can give you the support you need. Many benefits can come your way now if you are persistent.

Birthstone of February: Amethyst — Onyx

THE Daily Crossword by Roger Jurgovan



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the debt mountain
against the German
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Mr. Dini said in a
statement Saturday the
budget would stabilize
the economy and
bring it back to
growth. He said the
country's gross
domestic product
(GDP) had fallen
by 1.5 per cent in
1994, while in 1993
it had risen by 1.5
per cent.

Former central bank
chief, who was
appointed in 1993,
said the country's
economy was
facing a difficult
situation. He said
the government
was committed to
stabilizing the
economy and
bringing it back to
growth.

ROSCOPE

ESDAY, FEBRUARY 21, 1995

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business daily beat

A review
of economic news
from the Arabic press

Moneychangers see no need for separate company to buy, collect cheques

Most moneychangers
oppose the idea of setting
up a company to buy and
collect cheques in order
to resolve the problem of
bouncing cheques. They
say such an entity will
be a waste of money.

Mutib Kabarti, head of
the Jordanian Moneychan-
gers Association, said he
had never heard of such a
company in the region and
"there is no similar institution
anywhere in the world."

However, he said, should
such a company be estab-
lished, it should be backed
by a big financial company
to succeed. Noting that it
should also be headed by a
reputable and well-known
financial personality and
that it should be located
close to the city's com-
mercial centre with an
information network, Mr.
Kabarti pointed out that
even with all these facilities
such a company would fail
within months from begin-
ning its operations.

He explained that money-
changers would cash a
foreign cheque if it carries
the correct signatures while
Jordanian cheques can be
cashied from banks without
the need for an intermediary
body.

Abdul Ghani Al Sadat,
another moneychanger, wel-
comed the idea of setting
up a company to buy and
collect cheques. He said that
increasing numbers of tour-
ists were coming to the
country and carrying cheques
and, unlike moneychangers,
such a company would be
able to verify the authentic-
ity of the cheques and
whether funds are available
against it based on the
wide information net-
work that the company would
have.

Mr. Sadat noted, however,
that the proposed company
would not be able to stand
on its own unless it is backed
by a major commercial bank
and the Central Bank.

Employees working at
Deiraniyah Exchange said
moneychangers have small
and limited dealings with
cheques, especially from
outside Jordan and exclud-
ing Arab countries where
collection of cheques is
difficult. The employees
noted that the most secured
cheques they usually accept
are travellers cheques and
the holder agrees to the
price a moneychanger would
set.

They added that setting
up a company for accepting
and collecting cheques would
be very difficult and economi-
cally not feasible because
there are plenty of forged
cheques and conducting
investigations would raise
the cost, and make a deal
unlikely.

"Even if the success of the
proposed company is 90 per
cent guaranteed, the risk of
10 per cent would be enough
to lead it to bankruptcy,"
they pointed out.

The owner of Jaber Ex-
change said he does not have
etailed information about
the proposed entity but he
believes it would be a good
idea because it would pro-
vide the moneychanger with
quick information about the
drawer of a cheque based
on the wide information net-
work the proposed company
would have with banks
round the world.

Ala Deiraniyah said he
now need for the company
together if banks blacklist
their customers who abuse
their cheques and circulate
their names and businesses
throughout the financial sys-
tem of the country.

Hani and Abdul Salam
audi dismiss the idea as un-
rational and unfeasible.
anks can handle the matter
themselves, they said (Al
nstour).

Chamber of commerce forms sectoral groups

By a Jordan Times
Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The Amman
Chamber of Commerce is in
the process of organising
distinct groups to advise it
on the interests and concerns
of sectors which are not rep-
resented by any organisation,
officials said Monday.

They said a "consultancy
committee" representing the
stationary and printing indus-

try was formed and its office
bearers were elected recent-
ly.

Another group to rep-
resent the building material and
sanitaryware sector would be
formed after the "Eid Al Fitr
holidays."

"There are also plans to set
up such consultancy groups
within the Amman Chamber
of Commerce for sectors
which are not represented by
any other group under the

Ministry of Labour," said an
official, who preferred
anonymity.

"The approach is aimed at
ensuring that the interests of
all concerned groups are pro-
tected throughout and no sec-
tor remains without a repre-
sentative body to lobby on its
behalf whenever needed,"
added the official.

At the same time, the com-
mittees will also be able to
advise the members they rep-
resent on various develop-
ments that may concern them
and how new laws, regula-
tions and procedures affect
them, the official noted.

The "consultancy commit-
tees" effectively play the role
of the sectoral syndicates and
unions of various sectors of
the market, but cannot be
described as such because the
relevant laws and the statute
of the Amman Chamber of

Commerce do not permit the
establishment of such groups.

"The syndicates and un-
ions come under the jurisdic-
tion of the Ministry of
Labour and their statutes and
laws are more related to the
Ministry of Labour than the
Amman Chamber of Com-
merce," said an official.

According to the official,
who preferred anonymity,
the "effective role of the con-
sultancy committee is to
advise the board of directors
of the Amman Chamber of
Commerce on the interests
and concerns of their respec-
tive sectors so that the board
could adopt necessary ac-
tion."

There are more than two
dozen distinct syndicates and
unions registered and formed
with permission from the
Ministry of Labour. These

include the foodstuff sector,
clearing and forwarding,
shipping agents, taxi drivers,
bank and insurance com-
panies etc.

While it is obligatory for all
business establishments to
register themselves as mem-
bers in the Amman Chamber
of Commerce, membership
is voluntary.

The Ministry of Labour
supervises the functions of
the registered syndicates and
unions and their election of
office-bearers.

The respective syndicate/
union also has a strong say
along with the Ministry of
Labour in internal disputes in
the concerned sector as well
as inter-sectoral disputes and
offer assume the role of
arbitrator.

Financial Markets

Jordan Times
in co-operation with
Cairo Amman Bank

U.S. Dollar in International Markets

Currency	New York Close	Tokyo Close
Sterling Pound	1.5825	1.5840
Deutsche Mark	1.4810	1.4775
Swiss Franc	1.2525	1.2485
French Franc	5.1540	5.1325
Japanese Yen	97.30	96.40
European Currency Unit	1.5078	1.5035

Currency	1 MTH	3 MTHS	6 MTHS	12 MTHS
U.S. Dollar	5.81	6.00	6.75	6.50
Sterling Pound	6.37	6.50	6.87	7.37
Deutsche Mark	4.75	4.81	5.22	5.43
Swiss Franc	3.37	3.62	3.87	4.25
French Franc	5.81	5.67	6.00	6.57
Japanese Yen	0.06	0.06	0.10	0.10
European Currency Unit	5.75	5.60	6.31	6.88

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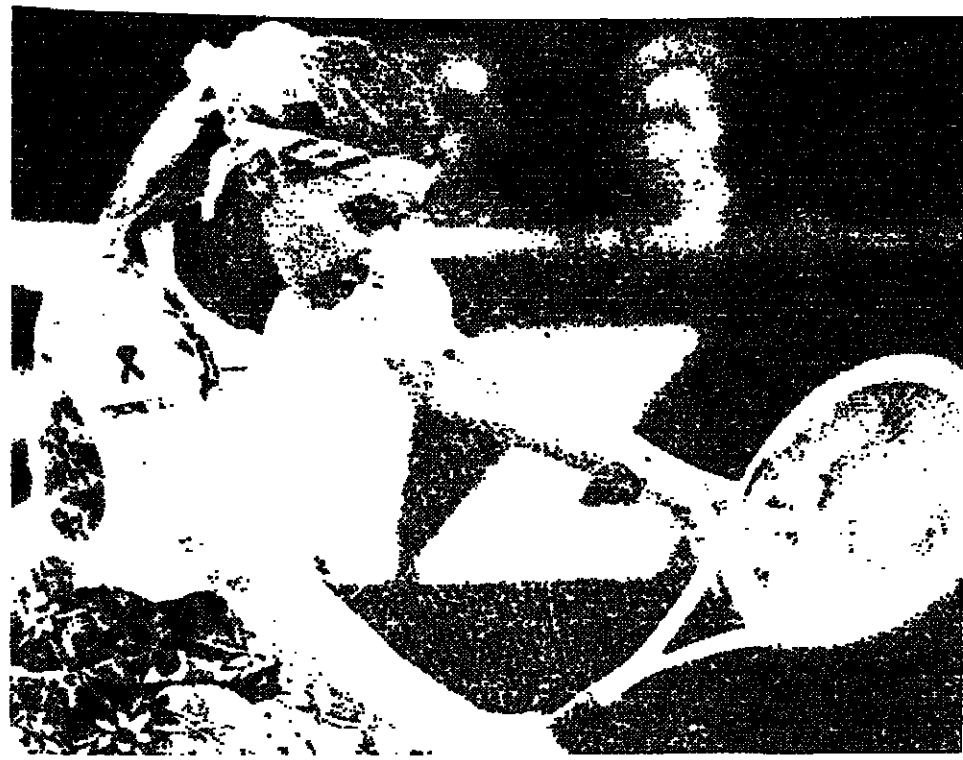
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Steffi Graf

Graf tops Pierce to regain No. 1 slot

PARIS (Agencies) — Steffi Graf erased a lot of doubts — her own and others — by routing Mary Pierce, 6-2, 6-2, Sunday at the Paris Open to regain the No. 1 world ranking.

"I came here on Monday... and I still felt I was not sure if I was ready to play in a tournament. I was not sure how I would do," Graf said. "Then to come here and beat two top five players. I just didn't expect anything like that could happen."

Before this tournament, Graf had been sidelined for three months with back and leg injuries, losing her No. 1 ranking while struggling to get back in condition.

"I didn't know I would do. I was just waiting for something to come," Graf said.

That something was four solid victories in a five-day span, including wins over fifth-ranked Jana Novotna in the semifinals and then over third-ranked Pierce.

As a result, Graf will move past Arantxa Sanchez Vicario when then new rankings come out.

Sanchez Vicario took over the top ranking on Feb. 6 after Graf missed the Australian Open. Pierce beat Sanchez Vicario for the Australian title, but was no match for Graf on Sunday.

Often depicted as too businesslike, Graf was euphoric about her victory and her form, grinning like a first-time winner.

"I'm extremely happy," she said. "The way I played in the tournament. The fact I was able to play... the way it all came together."

Graf played aggressively and served well, pounding 10 aces as well as numerous hard serves that set up easy forehand winners.

"Steffi was Steffi," Pierce said. "She served extremely well, which was an important part of the match."

"I was a little tired and a little bit sore for all the matches I played this week," Pierce added. "I'm not giving that as an excuse. Steffi played well but I was a step too slow today."

Graf had lost to Pierce twice last year, in the French Open semifinals and in the Virginia Slims quarterfinals in November, her last match before this week.

Graf said there was a big difference from her 6-2, 6-2 loss to Pierce at the French Open last June.

"I felt myself in a totally different spirit then," Graf said. "My tennis was way off. I was struggling with my game."

"I believe more in myself today than I did then."

Now Graf will go back to No. 1 to add to her 277 weeks she had previously held the top ranking. Martina Navratilova, who won this tournament the past two years, has the record of 331 weeks.

Sanchez Vicario will have a chance to regain the top ranking at the Indian Wells, Calif. tournament in March. Graf plays in Del Ray, Florida, the following week.

Kafelnikov upsets Becker in final

In Milan, Russian Yevgeny Kafelnikov stunned top-seeded Boris Becker 8-6 in a thrilling third-set tiebreaker Sunday to win the Muratti Time indoor and earn the biggest victory in his three-year pro career.

The 21-year-old Russian took two hours and 15 minutes to defeat Becker 7-5, 5-7, 7-6 (8-6) at Milan Forum, in the closest and hardest-fought final in 18 years of the Italian tourna-

ment. The fifth seed ranked 10th on the ATP Tour earned \$128,000 for the victory, but said he still feels like a junior player on the pro circuit.

Kafelnikov earned the decisive two points in the tiebreaker with a smash and on a double fault by Becker, who missed out on a record fifth title in Milan and a second consecutive tournament victory after winning Marseille last Sunday.

"He was better than I by one point, but he played a great match. I expect him to achieve other great results this year," Becker said.

Kafelnikov said Becker was his long-time idol "and playing him in a final of a major tournament was a dream coming true."

"He made me a special birthday gift losing this final to me," said Kafelnikov, who turned 21 Saturday while beating Goran Ivanisevic in the semifinals.

"Boris played at his best, and I felt close to defeat when he won the second set and took me to the third. But I never gave up. I always fought. It was my biggest opportunity."

The victory was Kafelnikov's fourth title, joining 1994 wins in Adelaide, Australia; Copenhagen, Denmark; and Long Island in the United States.

"It was difficult to reach the top 10 at 20. But it will be even harder to stay among the top 10 this year," the Russian said.

Unofficially, the ATP Tour figures he will rise to seventh when the weekly rankings are released Monday.

Becker, the defending champion in Milan, appeared to be heading toward an easy first-set victory when he broke the Russian in the first game and held to lead 2-0.

Kafelnikov, whose powerful backhand was the key to his victory, broke Becker twice to lead 5-2.

The German served 25 aces in the final and had 10 double faults, compared with Kafelnikov's three aces and four double faults.

"I'm sorry for missing the fifth title here," Becker said. "But I plan to try again in the next two years."

Martin beats Haarhuis

In Memphis, Tennessee, Todd Martin survived early problems, steadied himself and finally beat Paul Haarhuis of the Netherlands in straight-sets to win the St. Jude ATP tennis tourna-

ment for the second year in a row here Sunday.

Martin, the third seed, beat the unseeded Haarhuis 7-6 (7/2), 6-4, becoming the first player to retain the St. Jude title since Jimmy Connors won in 1983 and 1984.

Haarhuis, ranked 48th in the world, got the first break to go 2-1 up in the opening set.

"It was a pretty interesting situation. I was nervous and my opponent took advantage," said Martin, who will move from 16th to 11th in the world rankings on the strength of the tournament victory.

Haarhuis failed to consolidate his lead, wasting two break points in the fifth game.

Martin then broke back, and Haarhuis' serve let him down in the tie-break.

Pocketing the first set clearly improved Martin's confidence and he served 10 of his 16 aces in the second set — breaking Haarhuis in the third game and moving him relentlessly about the court.

"In the second set when he got the break, he never looked back," said Haarhuis. "His serve was working, and he never really gave me a chance."

The Dutch player said he tried to anticipate Martin's serve, but to no avail.

"I tried to step forward, just tried to be ready. And every time I would go forward, the ball would already be by me," he said.

Third time lucky for Schultz

In Oklahoma City, Brenda Schultz overwhelmed Elena Likhovtseva 6-1, 6-2 to win the WTA Tour women's tennis tournament here, finally carrying off the prize in her third appearance in the final of the event.

Schultz, the top seed, relied on her big serve, serving six aces in the final to bring her total for the week to 31.

"This whole week, I have played smart," Schultz said. "The surface here is very fast, so with my serve she never got into a good rhythm."

When I broke her in the second game of the match, I felt very confident."

In fact, Schultz won the first five games.

She didn't run into any trouble until she tried to close out the match, when she needed four match points in the final game to seal the victory.

The Russian beat U.S. star Jeff Rouse in the backstroke for the second time Sunday, setting a European record of 24.56 seconds in the 50-metre event. Rouse, who swam 24.85, holds the world record.

Selkov captured the 200 metre backstroke Sunday, one day after he trounced Rouse in the 100 metres.

Australia's Angela Kennedy won the 50 metre butterfly in 26.79 seconds, after setting a year's best of 26.73 in the qualifying heat.

Swimming World Cup

Van Almsick heads as Germans dominate

GELESENKIRCHEN, Germany (AP) — Franziska Van Almsick and Mark Warnecke won again Sunday as host Germany dominated the final day of the short course World Cup in swimming.

Van Almsick won the 100-metre freestyle — her third victory at the two-day event — pacing the German swimmers who turned the home pool to their advantage by sweeping seven of 12 events Sunday.

Warnecke, who is making a triumphant return from a shoulder operation, added the 100 metre breaststroke to the world record he set Saturday over 50 metres in that discipline.

"We were optimistic but we hadn't reckoned with these kind of results," said jubilant German coach Manfred Thiesmann.

Vladimir Selkov also turned a hat trick at Gelsenkirchen, which lived up to its reputation as a fast pool. Two world and three European records were shattered at the event, adding to the 53 world and 39 European records already recorded there.

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Juventus extend lead as Lazio crush Milan

PARIS (AFP) — Nantes surged eleven points clear at the top of the French first division at the weekend when they beat Martignes 3-0 to equal Paris Saint Germain's 1986/87 record of 26 matches unbeaten from the season's start.

Patrice Loko, who tops the goal list with 18, Reynald Pedros and Japhet N'Doram got on the scoresheet for the UEFA Cup finalists in a rearranged match.

Nantes now have 58 points, with second-placed Lyon and PSG, who play on Thursday at the Parc Des Princes, both on 47.

Juventus widened their lead at the top of the Italian first division by beating Napoli 1-0 while nearest rivals Parma lost at Cagliari, and in Germany Borussia Dortmund had a champions' look about them when they clinched a 5-1 win at third-from-bottom Munich 1860. The win kept them four points ahead of Werder Bremen, 1-0 winners over Dynamo Dresden.

Meanwhile in Spain leaders Real Madrid dropped a surprise point when they were held to a 0-0 draw at home by modest Albacete but they remain four points clear of Deportivo La Coruna who hammered visiting Racing Santander 3-0 thanks to goals from Voro and Beбето while Donato also slotted home from the penalty spot.

Juventus, who are seeking their first title since 1986, clinched their win twelve minutes from time — Fabrizio Ravanello, recovered from a mid-week calf strain, finding the net after a pass from under-21 international Alessandro Del Piero.

The win doubled Juventus' leading points margin from three to six with 45 from 20 games against 39 from 20 for Parma.

Cagliari beat Parma 2-0 with goals from Beretta in the sixth minute and Luis Oliveira after 15 minutes.

Lazio, with two consecutive defeats to Bari and Torino, bounced back to crush AC Milan 4-0.

International striker Giuseppe Signori scored a second-half hat-trick after Lazio went 1-0 up in the first period through an 18th minute goal from Pierluigi Casiraghi.

Without suspended sweeper Jose Chamot and Croatian striker Alen Boksic, down with flu, Lazio still dominated the outgoing champions who were in poor form and reduced the 10 men after 54 minutes.

beat Karlsruhe 2-1, were five points behind Dortmund while outgoing champions Bayern Munich, 2-1 winners at bottom club VfL Bochum, were six points adrift.

Dortmund coach Ottmar Hitzfeld pointed out that no club since Bayern in 1990 had won the title after leading at the halfway stage. He is even more cautious as Dortmund are without a title since 1963.

"So it was important to re-start with a win," he added.

Dortmund struggled after Michael Zorc's eighth minute penalty and Munich hit a post and the bar before German international Matthias Sammer got Dortmund moving again with a 57th minute strike.

Then Karlheinz Riedle, Swiss international Stephane Chapuisat and Andy Moller scored in a late burst. Chapuisat and Moller have both



Luis Oliveira (left) of Cagliari and Luigi Appoloni (right) of Parma duel during the Italian first league match. Cagliari defeated Parma by 2-0. Oliveira scored the second goal for his team (AFP photo)

Their captain Paolo Maldini was sent off for bringing down striker Casiraghi and Signori scored the first of his three goals from the Penalty spot.

Lazio are now level on points with third-placed AS Roma, who were beaten 1-0 by an excellent Genoa side thanks to a 13th minute goal from Czech striker Thomas Skuhravy. Genoa gave Japanese striker Miura his first full 90-minutes workout and he responded by causing panic in Roma defence.

In Germany Freiburg, who scored 11 goals so far this term.

Bremen beat fourth-from-bottom Dresden with a goal just before the interval from their Austrian midfielder Andreas Herzog whom Bayern are reported to be keen to sign next season.

Bayern have already persuaded Bremen coach Otto Rehagel to take over from Italian coach Giovanni Trapattoni next season.

Manchester United took another step towards a second "double" in successive seasons when they swept

into the last eight of the FA Cup at the expense of bitter rivals Leeds United here on Sunday.

Two goals in the first five minutes by Steve Bruce and Brian McClair had appeared to kill off this season eagerly-awaited encounter before a goal by Anthony Yeboah — Leeds record 3.4 million signing — eight minutes after coming on at the interval revived the visitors' hopes.

But Mark Hughes, playing his first match since gashing his knee in the process of scoring against Newcastle, produced a superb header 20 minutes from time to set up a home tie against QPR in the quarter-finals.

United, Liverpool, Arsenal and Tottenham are the only sides to have "done the double" — winning the Championship and FA Cup in the same season.

But lying second in the

Premiership, two points behind Blackburn Rovers, United remain on course to become the first side to achieve back-to-back Doubles.

The English football authorities and police are back on red alert following the violence in Dublin Wednesday but this potentially explosive clash passed off without major incident.

A capacity crowd of 43,000 turned up and though there was the ritual exchange of verbal abuse, there were only seven arrests.

"For the size of the crowd those figures are good and we are very pleased," said a spokesman for Great Manchester Police. "The crowd was well behaved generally."

Both United's opening goals came from Ryan Giggs' corners as first Bruce and then Brian McClair rose to put the Cup holders into the lead with many fans still making their way into the ground.

But in the 53rd minute Leeds restored some hope after an abject first-half performance when Ghanaian striker Yeboah prodded home David White's low cross from close range.

Two goals by Keith Gillespie gave Newcastle revenge for their only home defeat of the season and took them into the last eight of the FA Cup for the first time since 1976.

Gillespie's goals were his first for the club since his transfer from Manchester United last month in the seven million pound deal that took Andy Cole to Old Trafford.

Newcastle manager Kevin

Keegan was delighted with the two-goal performance of the youngster he described as one of the most exciting players in English football when he brought him to St. James Park.

"He's a real emerging talent and I'm delighted for him that he's off the mark," Keegan said.

But City, who beat Newcastle in the League Cup here in December, were left fuming about the circumstances of the Northern Ireland midfielder's first strike after 15 minutes.

The City players had all stopped in anticipation of a whistle after the linesman had flagged for offside against Paul Kitson.

But referee Gerald Ashby waved play-on and Gillespie charged down keeper Andy Dibble's clearance and rolled the ball into the net.

City responded with an equaliser by Uwe Rosler after 30 minutes before John Beresford's first goal in 22 months moments later put Newcastle ahead again.

Gillespie, who celebrated his 20th birthday on Saturday, grabbed the third midway through the second half.

Liverpool's struggling cup campaign continued at Anfield where the five-time winners were held to a 1-1 draw by battling Wimbledon.

The Reds were taken to replays in the last two rounds by first division Burnley and second division Birmingham and once again their inability to find the net has added another fixture to their congested season.

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Newcastle manager Kevin

SPORTS IN BRIEF

EBU pays \$72m for Nagano Games

GENEVA (AP) — The European Broadcasting Union has agreed to pay \$72 million for the exclusive European rights to broadcast the 1998 Winter Olympic Games, the International Olympic Committee said Monday. The amount is three times as much as the EBU paid for the rights to broadcast the 1994 Lillehammer Winter Games. CBS has already acquired the U.S. broadcast rights to the Games for a record \$375 million. The games will be played in Nagano, Japan. The EBU links 64 national broadcasters in Europe, the Middle East and North Africa.

Klinsmann named German captain

BERLIN (AP) — Jergen Klinsmann, the popular Tottenham Hotspur forward, was selected Sunday as captain of Germany's national soccer team for Wednesday's game against Spain. Coach Berti Vogts named Klinsmann to take over the role of the injured Lothar Matthaus, the Bayern Munich libero-midfielder and veteran international who had been captain of the national squad a record 67 matches. Matthaus, 34, tore his Achilles tendon several weeks ago in a career-threatening injury and will miss the rest of the Germany first division season. The 30-year-old Klinsmann, Germany's 1994 soccer player of the year, is competing with Juventus Turin defender Jurgen Kohler as a long-time replacement for Matthaus. Kohler, however, is also sidelined with an injury for the Spain match.

China awaits top female footballer

BEIJING (R) — Chinese females, who made major break-throughs with a series of world records in athletics two years ago, have broken another barrier in sport. For the first time, China's women footballers are eligible to win a golden shoe, for the player of the year, the Xinhua news agency said on Monday. Nationwide voting that began on Monday allows football fans to select not only their favourite male player, as in previous years, but a favourite woman as well, it said. The two winning players will be awarded a 180-gramme (6.3 ounce) golden shoe at the start of this year's league season in April.

Blair triumphs before home fans

MILWAUKEE, Wisconsin (AP) — Bonnie Blair, whose six Olympic medals include five gold, swept all four races at the World Sprint Speedskating Championships this weekend — her last competition on American ice. "This was the competition I was aiming for all season," Blair said after winning Sunday's 500m and 1,000m. "To a certain extent, I can

kind of relax a little bit." But, she hastened to add: "This isn't it. This was the main part of the season, but I still want to try to skate well the rest of the year." Blair, 30, will retire at the end of the season, after the closing World Cup events in Norway and Germany and a stop in Calgary, where she won her first Olympic gold medal in 1988. Though nearing the end of her career, Blair is still pushing the limits of her sport. She set the 500m world record in Calgary last month with a time of 38.69. Her times in winning Saturday's races here were track records — 39.13 in the 500m and 1:19.43 in the 1,000m.

Kiptanui confirmed for indoor championships

MONACO (R) — Kenyan world steeplechase champion Moses Kiptanui, who broke his own world indoor 3,000 metres record eight days ago, has confirmed he will take part in next month's world indoor championships in Barcelona. A statement from the International Amateur Athletic Federation on Monday said Russian sprinter Irina Privalova and American hurdler Allen Johnson had also confirmed they would take part in the meeting from March 10-12. Privalova, the European outdoor 100 and 200 metres champion, equalled her own world indoor 60 metres record this month while Johnson ended the 44-race unbeaten streak of Britain's world high hurdles champion Colin Jackson in Madrid on February 9.

Romario misses 3 easy chances

RIO DE JANEIRO (R) — Romario converted an injury time penalty after missing three easy chances in Flamengo's 3-1 win over Bangu in the Rio de Janeiro championship at the weekend. The goal took his tally in the competition to four — two of them penalties — while the win meant Flamengo finished top of group B at the end of the first half of the first round of the tournament, guaranteeing them a place in the final stage. Tulio of Botafogo is the competition's top scorer with eight in seven games while Clovis of Vasco da Gama has seven.

Marlin wins 2nd Daytona 500

DAYTONA BEACH (R) — Sterling Marlin held off a tremendous late challenge by Dale Earnhardt to win his second consecutive Daytona 500 in just .61 seconds in front of 150,000 fans on Sunday. Mark Martin was third, followed by Ted Musgrave, pole-sitter Dale Jarrett, Michael Waltrip, Steve Grissom, Terry Labonte, Ken Schrader and Morgan Shepherd. Marlin, who had never won a race before winning here last year, is only the third driver in Daytona history to win in consecutive years.

Christie storms to world 200m record

LIEVIN, France (Agencies) — Linford Christie showed he is serious about tackling the sprint double at the World Championships as he stormed to a 200m indoor world record at a star-studded international meeting Sunday.

The Olympic and World 100m champion, who revealed recently he would be concentrating more on the longer sprint this year and could even double up in Gothenburg, turned the tables on 200m world champion and training partner Frankie Fredericks here by winning in 20.35secs for his first-ever world mark.

That eclipsed Frenchman Bruno Marie-Rose's eight year record of 20.36, run on the same track.

And it also eclipsed British teammate and world silver medalist John Regis, who declared earlier this season that he was himself gunning for the 200m world record himself.

But here he could only finish third here and was then disqualified for running outside his lane.

Christie said: "I'm surprised. It's fun, it's great. I arrived here at midnight last night and only decided to run the 200 yesterday."

What made Christie's run even more remarkable was that it came after he had earlier improved his own 60m European indoor record by a hundredth of a second, running 6.47 to yet again leave Namibian Fredericks trailing in second place (6.52) with Nigerian Olapade Adeniken third (6.57).

The 34-year-old Christie had given a hint of his fine form eight days ago.

Just back from training in Australia with Fredericks, he opened his domestic campaign by running 6.56secs in an international match against France in Glasgow, which was then the second fastest time in the world this year.

Sunday was also a record-breaking night for Russia's double European sprint champion Irina Privalova over 200m. She ran 22.10 to improve her 1993 European mark of 22.15, easily beating Julie Cuthbert of Jamaica and Natalya Voronova of Russia.

Not to be outdone by Christie, she also won her 60m event, timing 6.94 to beat 200m world champion Merlene Ottey (6.97) and Commonwealth 100m champion Mary Onyalis of Nigeria (7.19).

There was no repeat record, however, for Moses Kiptanui of Kenya or pole vaulter Sergey Bubka.

The steeplechase world best made an attempt on his won 3,000m mark of 7min 35.15, recorded in Ghent in Belgium earlier this month, but missed out by two seconds as he clocked 7min. 37.14.

Bubka, the proud owner of 35 indoor and outdoor world records, won his event but the Ukrainian only needed to pass 6m to beat Russians Piotr Bochkaryov and Igor Trandenkov.

Sigei finishes outside top 40

In Nairobi, twice world cross country champion William Sigei, whose training has been disrupted by an ankle injury, finished outside the top 40 in the Kenyan Championships but was still named in a provisional squad for next month's world championships.

The men's race over 12 kilometres was won for the second time by Paul Tergat in a time of 35 minutes 11.9 seconds ahead of Kiptanui Muigeli who clocked 35:28.0.



Mario Reiter of Austria negotiates a turn in his first run of the World Cup Giant Slalom event in Furano 20 February (AFP photo)

Mario Reiter wins giant slalom; Tomba skids out

FURANO, Japan (AP) — When Alberto Tomba turned cold, he was cold indeed. When Mario Reiter was hot, he was sizzling.

Tomba came to Japan with 10 victories in 12 races, including triumphs in all seven of the World Cup season's slaloms.

He slid out of a slalom Sunday on the first run and a giant slalom Monday on the second. That continued a cold streak of never winning a race in Japan in a decade on the World Cup tour. Reiter came in with a record of no better than a 16th-place finish last season and no better than a fourth this winter.

With the fastest second run of the day, he placed second in Sunday's slalom. With his confidence pumped up, he came from behind again for victory on Monday.

"I've been working for this success a long time and worked very hard," said the 24-year-old Reiter, who had a tear in his eye after the finish.

Knee injuries in 1988 and 1990 set back his development. Both came in giant slalom races, and Reiter said he felt that with Monday's giant slalom victory, he was being repaid.

Slovenia's Jure Kosir, who went from first place to frustration on Saturday and Sunday, was first again after Monday's first run.

But, Reiter said, "I knew I had a chance to win today because I was only one-tenth (of a second) behind."

Still, he added, "it's unbelievable."

Tomba, he added, "it's unbelievable."

Tomba, third fastest in the first run, went right after Reiter in the second and needed a strong performance to pull ahead.

After a long flat section in mid-course, he slashed into the final steep portion and let his skis slip too far sideways on a turn, taking him out of the race.

"I made a mistake because I arrived too fast at that gate," he said. "I was thinking only of winning and it was impossible to be cautious."

Reiter had a total time of 2 minutes, 38.92 seconds for his two runs, edging Kosir by .11 seconds.

Norwegians took the next three places. Harald Strand-Nilsen finished third in 3:39.17, 25 behind the winner, followed by Lasse Kjus

in 2:39.22 and defending World Cup champion Kjetil Andre Aamodt in 2:39.39.

Tomba, known as "La Bomba" for his explosive racing, still holds a big lead in the overall World Cup standings.

"So of course my chance is good" for winning his first overall World Cup title ever, he said.

He has 1,050 points, while Kosir's second-place total climbed to 750. Five-time World Cup champion Marc Girardelli of Luxembourg, third with 603, was disqualified in Monday's first run and did not gain any points.

But Girardelli still has 10 races remaining to Tomba's two because Tomba does not ski in downhill and super giant slalom events. Kosir, a slalom specialist, said he was planning to enter at least one Super-G this season in an effort to pick up points.

Aamodt, another all-round skier, gained 45 points for his fifth place and moved up to fourth in the overall standings with 554.

Reiter leaped from 13th before the Furano races to sixth, with 515.

Tomba, whose last World Cup race before Japan was a giant slalom victory Feb. 4,

said he had lost his rhythm in the long layoff.

Now, he said, he was worried about his last two races of the season, still a month away in Bormio, Italy. They could be crucial, depending on the results of downhill and Super-G races in between.

He planned a week's holiday in Thailand before returning to training.

Kosir's frustrations began on Saturday, when he was fastest in the first run of a giant slalom — and Tomba was sixth — before gusting winds led to cancellation of the race after about one-third of the field had started.

On Sunday, he slipped from first after the first run to fourth overall.

Americans sweep aeriels

In La Clusaz, France, Trace Worthington and Nikki Stone gave the United States a sweep of the aeriels titles Sunday at the World Freestyle Skiing Championships.

The men's event produced spectacular jumps by the top contenders and marked the first time that five competitors scored more than 230 points. It also was the first time in four world championships that a Canadian didn't win the aeriels title.

In appreciation to all friends and staff of the German Embassy

Muayyad Barmawi and his wife Annie express their gratitude and appreciation to the friends and the German Embassy staff in Amman who contributed to the search for their daughter Milsa who has returned to her family safely.

Thank you all!

FURNISHED SEMI VILLA FOR RENT

Super deluxe, newly built villa, (not used) consisting of 3 bedrooms, 3 bathrooms, 3 spacious salons. With internal and external decorations, separate entrance, telephone and central heating, surrounded by a garden. Has luxurious furniture.

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Kindly contact Tel.: 673227

GOREN BRIDGE

WITH OMAR SHARIF & TAMMAM HIRSHI
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DON'T BELIEVE WHAT YOU SEE

Neither vulnerable. East deals.

NORTH
♠ K 8 6 2
♥ 10 3
♦ A J 10 9
♣ A K 10

WEST
♠ Q J 7
♥ A 9 3
♦ K J 6 2
♣ A 8 7 6 3

SOUTH
♠ A 10 5 4
♥ Q 9 7 5
♦ K 9 5 4 2
♣ 8

The bidding:
East South West North
Pass Pass 1 7 Dbl
Pass 4 4 Pass Pass

Opening lead: Two of ♠. You might ask why this hand should appear in a bridge column. Your Aunt Nellie could make four spades with the North-South cards. Unfortunately, your Aunt Nellie was not at the table when this hand was played in the Irish Trials.

South's pass was uncommonly cautious by the standards of bridge in the Emerald Isle. But when North could make a takeout double of West's opening bid, South bid the full value of the hand.

West led the two of diamonds, an obvious singleton. Declarer won in dummy and cashed the king of spades, latching the jack from West. To protect against a singleton jack of spades with West and prepared to

lose a trump trick to a doubleton ♠. J. declarer continued with a trump to the ten.

It will be a long time before declarer tries anything like that again. West won the queen of trumps, led a heart to East's ace and ruffed the diamond return. The king of hearts was cashed for the setting trick.

Had declarer had a combined total of nine trumps the finesse of the ten on the second round would be the technically correct play, based on the Principle of Restricted Choice. That does not hold true when the combined trump holding is only eight because the extra trump in the defenders' hands allows them to falsecard — as was the case here.

T-Wolves, Warriors trade forwards

OAKLAND (AP) — Golden State and Minnesota, stumbling through disappointing seasons, have traded forwards, with rookie Donyell Marshall heading to the Warriors and Tom Gugliotta to the Timberwolves.

The 2.05-metre Marshall, the fourth player selected in the 1994 National Basketball Association draft, signed a 9-year, \$42.6 million contract with the Timberwolves last fall.

But he has been something of a disappointment, averaging 10.8 points, 4.9 rebounds, 1.3 blocks and 25.9 minutes in 40 games.

"There was a rumour I was supposed to be traded for Billy Owens before the season started. It (Saturday's trade) makes me believe that it was true," he said.

Marshall, criticised for what some saw as a lack of enthusiasm, admitted he had a difficult year.

"It was a very up and down year. I really didn't have the opportunity to show what I could do," he said during a conference call Saturday night. "Other than that, my mood's been up and down. I never knew what was going to happen. It was a very difficult situation."

The Warriors got Gugliotta and three first-round draft picks in a Nov. 17 trade that sent Chris Webber, last season's NBA rookie of the year, to Washington.

Gugliotta was the sixth overall pick in the 1992 NBA draft for the Bulls.

With the Warriors this season, Gugliotta has averaged 10.9 points, 7.4 rebounds, 3.1 assists and 33.1 minutes in 40 games.

Timberwolves general manager Jack McCloskey hopes Gugliotta's all-out scrambling style of play might rub off on the Timberwolves, who have won only 12 games this season.

"There's no question he has a tremendous work ethic. He's a hustler, an aggressive player, who has really proven himself the two years he's been in the league," McCloskey said.

Minnesota rookie coach Bill Blair said Gugliotta probably wouldn't start at first, but eventually could win that role.

"I'm just real pleased we got Tommy. I think he's going to be a great addition to our team," said Blair, who added that he had worked with Gugliotta in Washington when he was an assistant coach there.

Saturday's trade was the Warriors' first move since coach Don Nelson resigned, and assistant Bob Lanier took over last Monday.

Results of Sunday's games

New York 122, Houston 117
Indiana 106, Miami 87
Minnesota 100, Orlando 95
Denver 94, Washington 92
Phoenix 110, Utah 107
L.A. Lakers 93, Portland 83

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Jazireh's women's basketball team to play in Bethlehem in March

By Aileen Bannayan
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — March 1995 will be an unforgettable month for Al Jazireh's women's basketball team when they will go down in Jordan's sports archives as the first team to visit the occupied territories since 1967.

After being hosted by the Catholic Action Club of Bethlehem, the team will have a mere two-week rest before they travel to Cyprus where they will be the guests of Kefalovrysos Club, one of five teams who played in Al Jazireh's international tournament in July 1994.

Both tournaments will put the finishing touches on the team's preparations for the Kingdom's basketball championship scheduled for mid-April when Al Jazireh will seek to win back the title they conceded to Al Orthodoxi after pulling out of the 1994 championship.

Al Jazireh's history-making trip, March 2-7, will include five matches against Palestinian teams: Orthodoxi Beit Jala, two matches against hosts Al Catholic (one of which will be under the patronage of Bethlehem Mayor Elias Freij), a match against Sariyet Ramallah, and the University of Bethlehem.

"Players are very enthusiastic about the idea of visiting the occupied territories which they have only heard about. They will also get to meet players of the teams we hosted in Amman," Jazireh's coach Fadi Al Sabbah Monday told the Jordan Times.

Al Jazireh's 5-0 record against Al Catholic and



Jordan's 1993 champions — Al Jazireh

Sariyet Ramallah teams whom they hosted three times. The two teams represent the best players in the occupied territories and will soon be played for the Palestinian championship.

Mr. Sabbah, who has 10 players on the initial lineup of the newly regrouped national team, hopes the matches will be a good test before playing more experienced teams in Cyprus, March 22-29.

Kefalovrysos have invited the Bethlehem team, Kalymnos of Greece, Syria's runners up Al Jala', Lebanese champions Homentmen, Jordan's reigning champions Al Orthodoxi in addition to Al Jazireh.

Kefalovrysos have moved from fifth to third place in the Cypriot championship and have two Bulgarian professionals on the team, while the Greek team is a second division

club. The Lebanese champions, who have six players on the Lebanese national team, are considered one of the top teams in the Arab World and have a remarkable record of winning their country's championship from 1957-1975 losing the title only once in 1966. They staged a powerful comeback and again won the Lebanon Cup in 1994 after the resumption of regular competitions following a decade-long interruption due to the civil war.

Al Jala' beat Al Jazireh twice with a good margin in Aleppo early in 1994, and finished second after Al Horriyeh in the Syrian championship.

Al Orthodoxi, who had an undisputed reign over the Kingdom's competitions lost the title to Al Jazireh in 1993, but easily won it back last year when Al Jazireh pulled out of the

competition leaving only Abu Nusair as Al Ahli and Homentmen did not take part.

Al Orthodoxi, who currently miss the efforts of Jihan Abdul Nour and Carol Seikaly who are out of the country, now have Shireen Abu Khader back on the team, together with Dima and Ghada Qandah, Hind Ghomri, Zina Farah and a young lineup of players.

Al Jazireh however boast a more coherent lineup that have been steadily improving since they first joined the women's championship in 1991 finishing fourth, then taking third place in 1992 before upsetting Al Orthodoxi in 1993.

The team includes Rana Hussein, Jumana Salti, Tala Mauge, Suhair Mackusi, Tamara Khadra, Rania Dajani, Hala Muheisen and a good group of ambitious players.

Russia add to gold reserves in University Games

JACA, Spain (Agencies) — Russian skiers tightened their grip on the World Winter University Games Monday, despite having to share the limelight with France in the women's downhill.

A day after two Moscow teachers gave Russia a one-two finish in the women's 10km cross country, Anna Larionova added a rare Alpine gold after clocking 1min 48.32sec in the downhill.

However, the other places on the podium went to the French, with Marianne Brechu taking the silver in 1:48.64 and Chrystelle Feli-saz, a World Cup skier for the past few seasons, winning the bronze in 1:49.25.

Alexei Tregubov, who was born and grew up in Russia but who is competing here for Belarus, won the men's 15km classic, ahead of Italy's Francesco Semenzato and Japan's Daichi Azegami.

Larionova won Russia's first Alpine gold of the post-Soviet era at this level, the most recent previous victory having been Natalia Buga's super giant slalom gold for the USSR at Sofia in 1989.

There was satisfaction too in the French camp for a race which had apparently gone exactly to plan.

Gerard Malho, the deputy delegation chief, said: "The coaches predicted a second and third place on the basis of training times," he said.

Tregubov, who is trying to break into the Belarusian senior team, streaked into an early lead and then clung on the win by more than 40 seconds.

"It was really hard in the beginning," he admitted. "But in the middle of the race, my coach told me I was 40sec in the lead, so I knew what I had to do. I had to see it through to the end."

The 23-year-old added: "I would like to be full-time in the World Cup, because I've been training for the past 12 years, but at the moment I'm still in the second team. I'd like to move up."

Japanese coach Akira Sato was disappointed with the result, but was consoled by the

fact that 20-year-old Azegami from Nagano had to defy the effects of a cold to win his medal.

"It was so-so," he said. "I was looking for the gold medal from either Masaaki Kozu (56th) or Katsushito Ebisawa (17th)."

"But I think that the skiers who started earlier had an advantage because the snow was harder. Later on, it began to melt and it made the going slower."

Spending for Summer University Games — \$1.5b

Spending on the World University Games this year in Fukuoka, Japan, will reach \$1.5 billion, matching the budget for the 1996 Summer Olympics in Atlanta, the president of the University Games said Saturday.

Primo Nebiolo, president of the Brussels-based International Federation for University Sports (FISU), said Japanese organisers told him

Saturday that a record 150 countries and more than 6,000 officials and athletes would attend the games in Japan Aug. 23-Sept. 3.

Nebiolo spoke at the nine-day Winter University Games opened in this northern Spanish ski resort. The games are open to amateur and professional athletes ages 17 to 28 who are students or just out of college.

"They are organising the World University Games like they were the Olympics," said Nebiolo, an Italian who also heads the IAAF, the world-governing body of athletics.

"I'm very happy to say Fukuoka has done an incredible job very rapidly, building so many new facilities," he added.

He said the jewel of the event would be a 52,000-seat, retractable-roofed stadium — known as the Fukuoka Dome — modeled after a similar domed stadium in Toronto, Canada.

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Robert De Niro & Nick Nolte in Cape Fear		Warriors		CONCORD '1' SPECIALIST SPEED		SUM'A in the satirical play HI CITIZEN Composed and directed by Mohammad Al Shawagieh Daily from 8:30 p.m.	Presents Abu Awwad in the social comedy Punctured Bag	Presents: The political satire: AL SALAM YA SALAM at 8:30 p.m.
Shows: 12:30, 3:00, 6:30, 8:30, 10:30		Shows: 12:30, 2:30, 8:30, 10:30		Shows: 12:30, 8:15 Shows: 2:45, 10:30 CONCORD '2' ROBOCOP '3'		Starring: Daoud Jalal, Haifaa Al Agha, Nariman Al Faqih & Abdul Kamel Khaliliah	The theatre is closed on Mondays Tickets are available all day	For reservation, please call 625155 The theatre is closed on Saturdays & Sundays

Shelling, shooting break calm in Grozny

GROZNY (Agencies) — Small arms fire and sporadic shelling broke an uneasy calm in southern Grozny on Monday, the day after a temporary ceasefire expired in the breakaway republic of Chechnya.

The warring sides had accused each other of breaching the shaky truce, which began last Wednesday. Both Russian and Chechen officials were reportedly still trying to arrange another round of peace talks.

Chechen President Dzhokhar Dudayev repeated his call Monday for talks with Russian President Boris Yeltsin, saying he never expected talks at the military level to succeed.

"Commanders are never able to solve problems," he told the Estonian newspaper Postimees, the Interfax news agency reported. He said the war in Chechnya will "last for another 50 years."

Mr. Dudayev also denied earlier reports about his son Avtur, saying he was only wounded and that his entire family now lives in the mountains.

As the ceasefire ran out, heavy explosions could be heard south of the shattered capital Sunday evening. Russian Interior Ministry troops with several armoured vehicles had dug in overnight near the village of Samashki, west of Grozny.

"There were some fire-fights but it was nothing drastic — we answered their (Russian) fire," said Ramazan Jabllov, the 34-year-old commander of Chechnya's "Baysangur unit," on his way out from southern Grozny.

Standing with a group of fighters on a stretch of empty road near the deserted village of Alkhan-Yurt, Mr. Jabllov

said: "We have not received orders to shoot and neither have we orders not to shoot. We simply answer their fire."

A light round smacked into the dense woods swathed in mist behind him, startling a group of women refugees. One of them, 45-year-old Tamara, explained they were on their way back after an unsuccessful attempt to see their apartments.

"They're firing at everything — it was too dangerous to go back," she said.

A mediator said meanwhile six Russian soldiers were exchanged for six Chechen fighters in a prisoner swap conducted under the supervision of monitors from the Russian republic of Ingushetia.

The mediator, Fyotr Kosov of Ingushetia, said the exchange was carried out Sunday in the town of Shali, 30 kilometres southeast of Grozny.

He said the Chechens handed over one soldier from Russia's Interior Ministry forces and five from the army in exchange for six Chechen fighters.

Mr. Kosov said 67 Russians had been freed from Ingushetia since the start of the war, and that an unknown number of other Russian soldiers had been released directly to their parents by the Chechens.

About 400 Russian soldiers have been taken prisoner by the Chechens since the war broke out, he added.

In Moscow, witnesses before a parliamentary commission into the Chechnya conflict Monday painted a picture of Russian miscalculation and duplicity in the run-up to the 10-week war.

But the man who was to have been the star witness at the inquiry, Defence Minister

Pavel Grachev, did not turn up, while four other ministers also refused to cooperate. Mr. Grachev, considered the architect of the brutal intervention, said he had other engagements.

Vladimir Kruchkev, former head of the KGB secret police, told the commission Russia had misplayed its hand as long ago as 1991 by backing the secessionist ambitions of President Dudayev as a way of hastening the disintegration of the Soviet Union.

Mr. Kruchkev, a leader of the failed 1993 coup against Russian President Boris Yeltsin, said: "Dudayev appealed greatly to the Russian authorities (under Yeltsin) in September/October 1991 because he denounced the Soviet Union."

Later, he said, "they realised it was too late (to crush the rebellion)." It was only after three years of Chechen independence, on Dec. 11 last year, that the Kremlin sent troops into breakaway Chechnya to overturn its secession.

Yusuf Soslanbekov, president of the Chechen parliament until it was dissolved by Mr. Dudayev in 1993, said the Russians had armed the Chechen secessionists under a formal agreement between the two sides.

According to some accounts, the Russian military was forced to abandon its weapons in Chechnya when it pulled its troops out of the republic in early 1992 after Mr. Dudayev's declaration of independence.

But Mr. Soslanbekov said: "The weapons which were allegedly abandoned by the Russians were in fact given to Dudayev through an agreement." He gave no further details.



TALIBANS: An unidentified commander of the Afghan religious movement Taliban stands besides BM12 multi-barrel rocket launcher at Charasyab, 25 kilometres from Kabul. The Taliban movement vows that the U.N. peace

plan for Afghanistan would fail unless they controlled Kabul, where new clashes between other rival factions resumed (see story below) (AFP photo)

Joint police-Jewish settler patrols spark outcry

TEL AVIV (Agencies) — An Israeli lawmaker expressed outrage on Monday that Israeli police and Jewish settlers in the occupied West Bank were conducting joint patrols near the Palestinian self-rule enclave of Jericho.

"I would call this a scandal, illegal," Ran Cohen, a member of Parliament from the leftist Meretz bloc, told army radio.

Mr. Cohen said settlers had a right to police protection as did any other citizens, "but in no way, no joint patrol, no joint stake-out." The radio said the patrols had operated for several weeks. It said they were conducted in civilian vehicles and used settler communication equipment.

Israel's police commander Ali Ron in the West Bank confirmed the existence of the patrols on Monday and acknowledged receiving complaints but told the radio: "I'm sorry, they're making a storm in a teacup." Israel's attorney general,

Michael Ben-Yair, called the patrols "problematic" and ordered an investigation, Israeli army radio said.

Last week, Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin sharply criticised Mr. Ben-Yair and the police for failing to prosecute lawbreakers among the 141,000 settlers in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

"When are you finally going to find ways to enforce the law against the settlers?" Mr. Rabin reportedly asked Mr. Ben-Yair in an angry outburst.

An official commission of inquiry into last year's Hebron mosque massacre found that police and the army were lax about following up on complaints by Palestinians against Jewish settlers. In the Feb. 25 massacre, a settler shot and killed more than 30 Muslim worshippers at the Ibrahim Mosque in Hebron.

The joint patrols have been conducted for the past two weeks in the vicinity of the West Bank town of Jericho, an autonomous Palestinian

enclave run by the Palestinian National Authority (PNA).

In the patrols, a uniformed police officer drives around with a settler in a jeep provided by the settlement.

Police said settlers have complained of increased security problems since Jericho became autonomous under the 1993 Israel-Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) accord.

Yoav Zimran, head of security at Megilot regional council that runs the patrols, said that police only join patrols when "trouble" is expected. "When we get information that someone is planning to damage our property we prepare joint ambushes," he said.

The settlements belonging to Megilot are north of the Dead Sea and south of Jericho.

But liberal legislators said they would seek to have the patrols stopped. "This is absurd and I fail to understand any logic or justification," Mr. Cohen told army radio.

"(They) police must treat all citizens equally — right, left, moderate or extreme and enforce Israeli law over all of them."

A senior Palestinian negotiator also demanded that the patrols be stopped. "It is a clear violation of the (autonomy) agreement," said Ahmad Qomreia, the Palestinian economy minister. "It is enough that the presence of the settlements and the settlers is illegal and now they are having joint patrols with Israeli policemen."

Mr. Cohen said a policeman would have a hard time arresting a settler with whom he shared patrols: "How could he bring him to justice? How could he enforce the law against him?"

Questions about Israel's ability to act against Jewish settlers reemerged last week when several hundred attended a memorial ceremony for the Hebron mosque killer, Baruch Goldstein.



King Juan Carlos fractures wrist

MADRID (AFP) — King Juan Carlos fractured a wrist after slipping on an ice patch in a Spanish ski resort at the weekend and will have a cast on his right arm for six weeks, his office announced Monday. It said the accident occurred Sunday while the king was walking at the Candanchu Ski Station in northern Spain carrying his skis. But despite the injury, the monarch went on with his scheduled activities and watched cross-country and figure skating competitions held at Sabadell, where the World Winter University Games were taking place. His accident means that he will be in a cast when the walks his daughter Infante Elena down the aisle when she gets married next month.

Diana's admirer left wife 'to be near her'

LONDON (AFP) — Art dealer Oliver Hoare's former chauffeur has alleged the wealthy Englishman left his wife briefly in late 1993 and lived in a small apartment in London to meet secretly with Princess Diana, a Sunday newspaper reports. The News Of The World, a tabloid weekly, quoted Barry Hodge, whom Mr. Hoare recently dismissed, as saying his former employer left the family home in London's fashionable Chelsea district in November 1993 and rented a one-room apartment near Victoria Station. "He was convinced he was leaving forever," Mr. Hodge told the paper, but two months later the wealthy art dealer returned to his wife Diana because "he liked his luxury too much." Mr. Hoare had considered moving to a larger accommodation, but shelved the plan, the chauffeur added. He said that when the dealer talked to Princess Diana on his car phone, the conversations sometimes lasted as much as an hour and were full of "passionate sounding whispering." In August, the News Of The World reported that Mr. Hoare had been bothered by anonymous, silent phone calls for almost two years and that the police had traced some of them to Princess Diana's private line.

Empty your post box, Mozambique president told

MAPUTO (R) — Mozambique's President Joaquim Chissano has been warned by the country's post office to empty his post box or have his mail consigned to the garbage dump. The president's office is one of 24 institutions which have not been collecting their mail from private boxes at the Maputo Central Post Office, the Maputo daily Noticias said Sunday. "Pick up your letters or we will be forced either to return them to the senders or consign them to the garbage heap," the post office notice said. Other offenders included the Vatican's embassy or Apostolic Delegation, the Nigerian and Pakistani embassies, the Mozambican National Customs Board, the national Directorate of Finance and the State Secretariat for Civil Aviation.

The Swiss hamlet that roared

BERN (AFP) — A tiny Swiss hamlet trying for 13 years to switch cantons has finally got its chance, but it will mean four plebiscites spanning a year at a total cost of \$4 million. Vellerat, home to all of 70 people, is part of the Bern canton but has been pushing to fall under the jurisdiction of neighbouring Jura. The only road leading out of Vellerat goes to a village in Jura, and the people of Vellerat depend on this village for its post office, school and even its cemetery. Under the Swiss constitution, the only way for the hamlet to take place is through four plebiscites — one local, two regional and another on the national level. They will begin on March 12, take a year and cost \$4 million. Campaigning for the first plebiscite, in the Bern canton, began this weekend. Voting will take place in Vellerat itself, then Jura and finally on the national level.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Christians voice fear of peace process

NICOSIA (AFP) — Leaders of the Middle East's 15 million Christians on Monday voiced fear over obstacles to the Arab-Israeli peace process including Israeli settlement building in occupied territories. The executive committee of the Middle East Council of Churches which ended a four-day meeting here Monday studied a report on the "obstacles and challenges to the peace process," it said in a statement. The report said that the "fait accompli created in the occupied territories and especially in Jerusalem" through expansion of Jewish settlements there "will prevent the conclusion of peace, stir up violence and religious fanaticism and increase emigration, notably among Christians." The 24-member committee also chose three assistant secretary generals, including the first woman to occupy the post since the council was created in 1974. Jordanian Nahla Karmashe of the Greek Orthodox Church was appointed, along with Lebanese Paul Sayah, a Maronite Christian, and Coptic Christian Samir Morkos. The council also agreed in principle to allow the membership of the Assyrian Church, the only Christian church to be excluded from the organisation.

'Rabin is personal problem for PLO'

PARIS (AFP) — The Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) has a personal problem in dealing with Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, who has led an administration that has "shattered" the peace process, a senior PLO official said Monday. Afif Safieh, the PLO's London representative, told journalists here that, in order to save peace, the organisation might have to "review our vision on the peace process itself" during a key meeting of its executive body Tuesday in Cairo. Speaking on the sidelines of a forum on the Middle East peace process, Mr. Safieh admitted that the PLO has "a problem with Mr. Rabin in person." Mr. Rabin was "supposed to be a statesman. He turned out to be only a general with a very narrow and short-sighted vision" of the peace process, the representative added. Mr. Safieh charged that Israel had "totally shattered the pillars of legitimacy of the process and has not respected its own agenda." He stressed that the Cairo talks would not deal with internal PLO issues. "In Palestinian domestic terms it is not a crisis meeting," he said.

Man who plotted to kill Arafat in jail

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) — A senior Palestinian official said Monday the authority was trying to put a man on trial for plotting to assassinate Yasser Arafat. The secretary general of Mr. Arafat's office in the Palestinian Authority, Tayeb Abdul Rahim, made the revelation in an interview with the Ramallah-based weekly newspaper Al Hayat Al Jadida. "The civilian judicial system has failed until now to try a Palestinian charged with attempting to assassinate Chairman Arafat," Mr. Abdul Rahim said. The interview came after Mr. Arafat himself spoke recently of an attempt on his life. Unconfirmed reports have said the suspected assassin was a member of the headline Palestinian group Abu Nidal detained last November. However, the authority's attorney general Khaled Al Kidra told AFP: "I know of no such case pending before the courts." But he confirmed that several Abu Nidal men had been arrested in November.

Kuwaiti court postpones ruling in Bush case

KUWAIT (AP) — A high court Monday postponed until March 20 a ruling on the appeals of seven Iraqis and two Kuwaitis handed down death and prison sentences for plotting to kill former U.S. President George Bush. A court official notified reporters of the postponement and the new date, but refused to explain why. It was the second time that the five-judge cassation court has put off the ruling, which was first expected on Feb. 6. After a one-year trial, a state security court on June 4 sentenced five Iraqis and a Kuwaiti to death. They were found guilty of conspiring to detonate a car bomb in April 1993 at Kuwait University, where Mr. Bush was to be honoured for leading the international coalition that ended Iraq's seven-month occupation of Kuwait in February 1991. Two other Iraqis and a Kuwaiti were handed prison sentences of up to 12 years for complicity. The defendants' lawyers appealed the sentences, claiming these were predicated on insufficient evidence. The cassation court's ruling is final. The court does not retry cases, but considers the legality of verdicts.

Afghan peace plan remain snagged

CHARASYAB, Afghanistan (Agencies) — U.N. mediators and the Islamic student movement Taliban failed Monday to break a deadlock over the group's conditions for backing the latest U.N. plan to end Afghanistan's civil war.

A special U.N. delegation and leaders of the Taliban met for two hours in Charasyab, south of Kabul, but failed to agree on conditions set by the group before it will back the U.N. plan to install an interim government in Kabul.

"We told the U.N., if you meet our conditions, your process will succeed," said Mullah Borjan, commander of the Taliban base of Charasyab.

The Taliban, a recently formed group boasting some 25,000 troops whose fighters are within 15 kilometres of Kabul, want control of security in the capital before President Burhanuddin Rabbani transfers power to the U.N.-proposed interim governing council.

The interim council was to take power Monday as a prelude for a nationwide ceasefire.

Two other Taliban conditions are that council members be "good Muslims" and that all of Afghanistan's 30 provinces be represented on the body.

Pro-Rabbani frontline troops scoffed at the security demand.

"We will never let them enter the city, no way," said a pro-Rabbani trooper seen digging new bunkers and cleaning heavy weapons on the eastern Kabul frontlines.

U.N. special negotiator Mahmoud Mestiri and four Afghan members of the proposed council met the Taliban delegates for two hours at a disused hospital in Charasyab.

Parked outside the hospital were six Russian-made T-55 and T-62 tanks and two armoured vehicles, which the Taliban said they had captured from Gulbuddin Hekmatyar's anti-Rabbani Hezbe-e-Islami faction that was driven from Charasyab a week ago.

Taliban commander Mullah Borjan said he hoped for peace through negotiation, not fighting, and added that talks would continue.

The United Nations made no statement on Monday's talks.

Israeli planes attack Hizbollah positions

MARIYOUN, Lebanon (Agencies) — Israeli planes twice raided Hizbollah guerrilla targets in southeastern Lebanon on Monday in a second day of air attacks, security sources said.

The planes fired nine rockets in two raids 30 minutes apart into the Maydoun hills, on the southern edge of the eastern Bekaa Valley, used by Hizbollah to attack Israel's occupation zone in South Lebanon.

A senior Hizbollah official said the militants would step up special operations against Israeli forces in the coming few days.

"You should expect an increase in special military operations against the Israeli enemy in the coming few days," member of Hizbollah's politburo Ahmad Qamar told reporters in Sohmor village, eight kilometres north of Maydoun.

Security sources said there were no casualties in the raid, which targeted a rugged wooded area full of caves where guerrillas hide weapons to attack Israel's 1,000 troops and their 2,500-strong South Lebanon Army (SLA) militia allies.

(Continued on page 3)

Israel has carried out nine air strikes in Lebanon this year.

Pro-Israeli militia sources said that hours before the air assault guerrillas fired mortar bombs at two posts manned by SLA militiamen at Sojoud and Beir Kallab. No one was hurt.

Israeli and SLA gunners responded with artillery fire on guerrilla-held areas north of the zone.

On Sunday, Israeli artillery pounded Hizbollah-held areas in South Lebanon killing two civilians and a guerrilla after Hizbollah fighters killed an SLA militiaman. Israeli planes also raided Hizbollah posts five times, wounding one guerrilla.

Lebanese officials linked the latest spiral of fighting in and around Israel's self-declared "security zone" in South Lebanon to the deadlock in Middle East peace talks.

Israel, however, blamed Beirut's dependence on Syria, which deploys 35,000 troops in Lebanon where it wields considerable political influence, for the fighting.

Syria slammed Israel and urged the United States to

Sudan reports secret talks with rebels

KHARTOUM (R) — Sudan's government last year held several rounds of secret negotiations with various factions of the rebel Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA), a senior government official was quoted on Monday as saying.

Musa Sid Ahmad, of the High Council for Peace, told the privately-owned Akhbar Al Youm newspaper the talks were held in Khartoum.

President Omar Hassan Al Bashir, a lieutenant-general, formed the peace council last October.

Mr. Sid Ahmad gave no dates for the meetings but said they included several groups, including the SPLA faction led by John Garang and that headed by Riak Machar, the Southern Sudan Independence Movement.

The SPLA was not immediately available for comment.

The paper quoted Mr. Sid Ahmad as saying the talks came within the context of government efforts to bring peace, but gave no further details.

Colonel Garang and Mr. Machar have accused former SPLA commanders such as Kerubino Kwanyin Bol and William Nyoun of secret talks and deals with Gen. Bashir's

government and have alleged that they and their groups have fought alongside government troops in war-torn southern Sudan.

Sudan unfazed by label

Sudan does not fear being isolated or labelled a terrorist state, the country's top Muslim fundamentalist leader Hassan Al Turabi was quoted on Monday as saying.

"We do not care about isolation because God is with us," Akhbar Al Youm newspaper quoted Dr. Turabi as telling students at Khartoum University.

"We do not fear being placed on the list of terrorists because that is a list of honour."

In 1993 the United States placed Sudan on its list of countries that sponsor "state terrorism."

Sudan denied the charge saying the United States is simply against its Islamic orientation.

Dr. Turabi holds no official position but is widely believed to be the main driving force behind Islamist policies of the government.

Dr. Turabi said Sudan was engaged in an international battle for religion and westerners had begun to fear jihad (holy war).

Opposition urges Sanaa to respect accord

SANAA (AFP) — Seven Islamic and left-wing opposition groups accused the government on Monday of failing to keep to an accord signed a year ago and amid a healing rifts between the north and south.

In a statement sent to AFP, the seven including the Yemeni Socialist Party (YSP) which led an abortive bid to create a breakaway state in the south in the May-July 1994 civil war, said the accord "must form the basis of a national reconciliation."

The accord was signed in Amman on Feb. 20 by President Ali Abdullah Saleh, a northerner, and his former southern rival and ex-YSP leader Ali Salem Al Beidh after clashes between their two forces.

The head of the Islamic Al Islah, Abdullah Al Ahmar,

also signed the accord along with about 30 of the country's political leaders.

It set out planned political reforms and a decentralisation of the administration.

But Mr. Saleh, leader of the General People's Congress, and Al Islah, which together now form the coalition government, denounced the accord at the beginning of the two-month war in May.

"The Amman accord was not a document to end the political crisis between the ruling parties, but an alternative for the foundation of a modern, unified and democratic state," the statement said.

"The deep political and economic crisis confronting the government is due to its renunciation of the accord," it added.

The accord was signed in a

bid to defuse tension between Mr. Saleh and Mr. Beidh who had been at loggerheads for months over running the country created when the former North and South Yemen merged in May 1990.

Food prices go up

The Yemeni government has pushed up the price of food in state shops by close to 40 per cent to allow them to put more goods on sale in a bid to control spiralling prices on the open market.

It has also decided to set up special courts to crack down on wholesalers who try to sell products at more than the official rates, legal officials said Monday.

The effect of rising food prices in Yemen, one of the poorest countries in the world, has been exacerbated

by the Yemeni rial's slide against the U.S. dollar.

The greenback now reaches 115 riyals on the open market compared to 12 riyals at the official rate. A public sector worker in Yemen earns on average between 4,000 and 6,000 riyals a month.

A 50-kilogramme bag of corn in state shops has risen from 160 riyals to 225 riyals, an increase of just over 40 per cent. The same bag of corn on the open market costs 600 riyals.

The government has increased the price of flour by 44.7 per cent and sugar by 33.6 per cent.

The price increases are designed to make more goods available in state shops, forcing the free market to lower its prices.